RECORDS

AND OTHER POEMS

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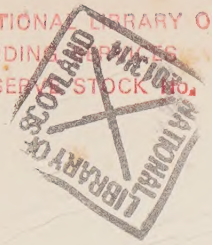

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Robert Leighton.

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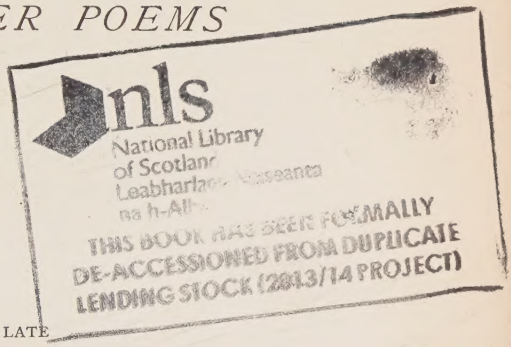

BY THE LATE

ROBERT LEIGHTON

AUTHOR OF "REUBEN," "SCOTCH WORDS," ETC.

LONDON
C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1880

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The world rejoices when the living spring
That well'd in secret through some great good heart,
Breaks up into the light. But wherefore give
Your little secrets to a busy world?—
Alas! do I not live, and breathe God's air
That makes one brotherhood of great and small?
The poorest heart, when it beats out its life
In sweet sincerity, becomes a fount
Where all might quench some thirst—e'en while they smiled
At weaknesses reveal'd, and sins confess'd.—
In this I rest my hope, that what may seem
Needless obtrusion pleads its own excuse;
Since much of what I give, was in its day
The impulse that I could not choose but write.

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RECORDS.

I.

THE records of a life should be a poem;
We need not go abroad for stones to build
Our monumental glory; every soul
Has in it the material for its temple.
The universal beauty is our own;
We steep our thoughts in sunsets, and we hang
Our adoration on the morning star,
And yet from us they get that alchemy
Whereby they strangely move us. Nought is ours
But that which has gone from us. Therefore 'tis
That disappointments often tread upon
The toes of expectation. Things without
Are bare until we clothe them. Let us seek
Each one our gods in our immediate heaven:
There is no breathing for us in another;
But either is the air too coarse and weighs
Like nightmare on our thoughts, or 'tis too fine,
And, like the atmosphere of mountain tops,
Usurps the brain, and finds insidious way

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Into its chambers, pressing out the soul,
Till death o'ercome us in the guise of sleep.

Yet all may grow to live upon the heights;
Deep thought and action of the soul make close
The fibres of the brain, so that no air,
However fine, can press the spirit out;
In time thus fitting us for another heaven
Above what was our own.

Our truest life
Is THOUGHT, high and sincere, and to ourselves.
When eyes are felt upon us we are players,
And life becomes untrue. We may not mark
The Poet's phrensy, when the stars and he
Are revelling in night, and all the winds
Are bringing music to their jubilee.
Did we but look in with unhallow'd eyes,
He would be all in darkness, and the stars
Beaming, unconscious, in their heavenly places,
And all the winds gone back into the forests.
So, nothing of his phrensy can be known,
Save what his rhymes blab out to knowing readers—
And yet that phrensy is his truest life.

True thought blends into beauty, and we all
Are poets when we reach it. Could we give
The records of this thought—this our true life—
The records of our life would be a poem.

II.

Was ever greater truant! I who know
That my salvation lies in thee alone—
Who never gave a brief hour of my heart
All over to thee, but the angels came
And bathed my blind lids with their dews of Heaven,
Till I, of poorest insight, even I
Could see the fine light wherein poets dream!
Yet have I left thee, Poesie, as if
Thou, and not I, were the uplifted one.

O blame the weight of the restraining earth,
And not the heart that would for thee aye beat;
Nor yet the head that sees how truly thou
Must be the God-sent mistress of my love.
I never slight thee but my mind becomes
A sunless plot that lies to the bleak north,
And ever seems to be in the year's back end:
A dismal, dreary place, of stunted growth,
And only by the lapwing's desolate cry
Startled at times into a lone weird life.
If thou art long away my heart runs waste,
Rank weeds o'errun the garden of my brain,
And choke the flowers which thou hast planted there.
But give thee hearty welcome,—like a sun
Thou swimm'st into my being, and my heart

Is jubilant as May ; and, like a sky
Of unseen larks, life rings, I know not whence.

If through my being I could shape thy course
Like a bold river with broad cliffy banks,
My life would be the rich and joyous vale
Through which it runs. But I am undefined,
And can but give thee flat and sedgy bounds.—
Full forced and lavish as thy bounteous source,
Thou leapest from God's hills into my heart,
But suddenly art lost within a marsh,
And thy clear voice grows husky in the reeds.
It is a sluggish and a fruitless land!

O is there no rich soil beneath this mire?
I'll drain the fens, or sink with all my work!—
My thirsty nature gulps the living stream,
And gives none out: it stagnates, and is seen
Only in miry pools. But through my life
I'll bank a river's bed: the fenny lands
Shall pay dear tribute in a thousand rills,
And give an earthy warmth unto the flow
That comes from Heaven's hills ; which else were clear
But chilly as the light of winter stars :
Chilly to human hearts, though to the gods
The life-blood of their veins.

O pure and cold
The things we cannot reach! Duty is cold ;
Stern Virtue, God Himself!—We *bask* in Sloth,

As on a grassy slope at summer noon ;
Vice draws us to it like an evening fire ;
And Godlessness is like a tropic air,
It slackens thought and gives an unnerved bliss.
A sensuousness clings to us like a shell :
From Duty, Virtue, God, we shrink like snails
Into this Frailty, and deem all safe.
Weak fools ! but wiser Fate ! a passing foot
May crush us out on Duty, Virtue, God.

To him that shrinks from frost the frost is cold.
Let him go forth and meet it, and it warms
More kindly than red brands. The way to life
Is towards forbidding things : growth in approach ;
In nearness, love ; and reach'd, the soul's great life.

God gives out His divinity in rays
That reach the earth ; and Poesie is one.
Souls faithful to the lode grow up to God,
Each missioned by the genius of his ray.
But faithless truants meet as faithless guides
That lead into the sloughs : a wandering lamp
Hangs out before ; the furies dog behind ;
And thus they grope about the miry night.
And when each morn God's sun wakes up the day.
He finds them ever groping where they were !
Nor shuns he them like sanctimonious saint,
But with his bright and all-embracing eye
Seeks to reclaim them.

Brothers of the dark,
Our sun breaks every day: we heed him not—
The insulted, slighted, most forgiving sun!
A revell'd night are our lost yesterdays,
All huddled into one, each day shut out.
Forget them as one night—what loss in that?
Eternity is round it. Be next dawn
Our first income of light. God never breathes
But through the infinitude each faithful soul
Receives its special want. O, brothers, watch!
We've singed our wings like moths in a false light,
And cannot with the larks meet dawn i' the clouds:
But see! the sky is ruffling in the east
Like a calm sea before a landing ship,
And we are on the shore with leaping hearts
To meet long parted friends. Soon will the sun
Lie high and dry upon the eastern strand,
And earth be stirring as a disembarkment.
We'll lose each other then. Each waiting heart
Fill'd with its own lost ray, base loves shall pale,
Like tapers of the night when day's let in,
And truer vision come with truer light.

Henceforth I live and die with my heart's love.
We rise or fall together. If I fail
To woo her as the world deems worthily,
Still have I peace of mind in having given
My poor best up to my most worthy love.
Failure in this were peace and joy at last.
Successes fanning from all other points

Were misery, so this were left unstrived.

I give her all my being in the faith
That he who gives his all of love and will
Can never fail, but—though the outer works
Of his dear acts become no worshipp'd fane,
Be all unworthy of a world's regard,
And fail to it—still bears within himself
The true wage of success—the *having done.*
And he has built *his* temple to the gods.

Lead where thou wilt, I'll follow. Deeper trust
Is with me now than when, in the young time,
Thou led'st me into sunny showers of thought,
Wherein my utterance was like that of dreams—
All clear and full while *in* the dream; but, waked,
Dim, poor and meaningless; until again
Thy show'ry light came, and the same weak words
Were big with their lost meaning.—In the night
The earth's green loses meaning, and her flowers
Are all one eyeless black: but when she walks
In beamy day, the meadows and the flowers
Get back their lost expression. Who shall say
The night, and not the day, brings out the true?

Thou art my sunlight. I have learn'd to know
The highest as the truest; to trust more,
Light that discovers even a changeful sense,
Than Dark that may confound it, but gives none.—
O if thou art indeed a ray from God,

And if in thee I have my highest reach,
My deepest ecstasy, my best of life,—
What then but give a dedicated heart?
What then! but that the Universal Love
Beats like a heart in nature, pulsing out
Its deep flood to extremities of soul,
And moves us, all unconscious and despite
Our partial likings, to the good in all.

But, Poesie, thou art God's broadest beam—
The secret life, the charm of all our loves.
If I may not go heart and hand with thee,
Come thou and go with me. If I must cling
To things that in my soul I do not love—
Things that yet share the universal good—
Be with me; be the light to show the good.

III.

Bewilder'd in a maze of crowding themes,
O'erwhelm'd with multiplicity of books—
Each calling out "Lo, here! I am the way"—
And seeing more to do than can be done,
I idly stand, not knowing *what* to do:
And with a dim perception of a journey,
I loiter here in doubt which way to take.

Thou fool, do anything—take any way
That is not labell'd to thy conscience *wrong*:
For all are from one source, and to one end.
Know thou, the smallest atom is a door
Into God's temple, and if we but had
The secret of its opening, one step,
At any time, would lead us into paradise.
And never doubt but that we are surrounded
With pleaders, great and small, that bid us come.
The heaving ocean everlastingly
With its big errand pants, and twice a day
Entreats a special hearing. Canst receive
That universal language? Listen well;
For all things speak it, and it is the tongue
That Spirits use:—
Yon silvery slipper'd brook,
That, with a ceaseless prattle from the hills,

Comes nimbly tripping o'er the mossy stones,
Cannot contain its joy: "Come thou with me—
Into my being let thy spirit slip,
Gliding as in a dream, and I will take
Thee to the green banks of thy spirit home":—
The monarch sun that draws the adoring gaze
Of worlds, has still a special word for man:
"Though outward light should blind thy outward eye,
Turn not thy gaze from me; thy inner orb
Will open to new seeing and new light;
And know thou this: the outward mortal is
A symbol of the inward everlasting":—
The stars in their long watches of the night,
Are ever shedding incense on our hearts,
Loving a lone heart more than gilded altar:
"O not with searching telescope canst thou
Our glory reach, not in round numbers tell
The mystery of our nature: If thou wouldst
Receive the God-sent message of the stars,
Then hang upon us with a poet's eye
That loves us for our beauty, and seeks not
Too curiously our secrets, yet drinks in
The unseen essence that enriches him,
And makes him the most wise astronomer":—
And who on autumn night ne'er felt the moon
Creep through him like a maiden's soul that is
With love's fine fire aglow? Old Night's fair child,
That in chaste maidenhood must aye remain—
Rich in a dower of renewing youth:
Wherefore her office is to woo young hearts

And lead them gently to a higher love.
O I have seen—about the harvest time—
When most young hearts into their moon-age pass—
I have, myself, seen then, upon the air,
Rushing between our own earth and the moon,
Thousands of bright and starry threads of fire;—
They were not star-lights shooting *to* the earth,
But emanated from love-kindled souls
Upon the earth, and centred in the moon.
I've seen a Poet on the dreamy shore—
The ocean in deep slumber at his feet,
With scarce the motion of a sleeper's breast,
The full moon lapping all in milky light,
He, like a statue, staring into her—
Become, methought, so lustrous in himself,
That, even in that shiny night, he glow'd
Like palest marble on a ground of black:
And thus he stood, drawing down light from heaven,
Until the moon went out and earth was dark;
Yet he was not; and then it was I saw
The light he drew was not the moon's alone,
But that which flows inside of hers—unseen
Till garner'd in the cumulating soul.

But not the waters and the stars alone!
All things, in sea and air and on the earth,
Are half invisible to outward sight,
Walling the Eden of our destiny.
But yet they tell, in mutterings and shadows,
The mysteries beyond; and he that once

Has caught the unknown tongues, been startled with
The shadows, like a wing swept o'er his soul,
Is ever after glorified, has found
The opening and the everlasting way.

We may not enter wholly but by death,
Which is our passport. For the present 'tis
Enough for us to listen from without,
And read the words and signs that on us break—
Deep in the forest fanes, 'mid Druid oaks,
Where silence is so silent that it may
Be strangely heard in many whisper'd voices
That speak together from behind the trees :—
Away among the glens, where, like a god,
The eagle sits upon its thronèd peak,
Gleaming like gold far up amid blue air,
And drawing out the earth-stains of our hearts,
To the dispersion of his airy cliffs :—
On mountain ridges where the young winds come
Out of the vales to play. We listening hear
Them rustling up the heath, but mark them not
Until they burst in kisses on our cheeks :
Then rush they on in laughter like wild maids,
While all the mountain gullies laugh in turn,
And spread their arms like lovers to receive
The dimpled beauties falling out of breath :—
By mountain tarn whereto the weary sun
Has clomb the hills to drink, and where the stars
Come stealthily at night to bathe, like nymphs
That shame to strip until the sun has gone :—

By ruin'd castles, where the warrior's eye
Gleams down dark centuries upon our souls
And wakes them to the clang of wilder'd days;
Or where the gray walls start into old mirth
At thought of all the ancient revelrie
That brimm'd them o'er. Lay thou a deep ear there,
And thou wilt hear the music as of yore,
Bursting the hall-doors open, like a tide
That breaks in waves upon the night's black shore.
And if thou'lt wait until the morning star
Bedew the East with luscious dropping light,
And lay thine ear close to the castle wall,
Thou'lt hear strange things! At that hour maids of old,
Troubled with love's unrest, rose from their dreams,
And to that lattice-gazing star sighed out
The burden of their hearts: from donjon cell
The lips that scorn'd to mourn, unconsciously
Told out their sorrows in deep stifled moans,
As that heart-seeking star crept on their gloom:
And from that wilder'd time those sighs and moans
Have hung about the crumbling walls:—maybe
The souls that bore them come at fitting times
To live old woes transform'd to eternal joys;
For heavenly spirits love to haunt those places
That in their earth-life drank deep of their thought.
The noted places of the earth are hung
With cobwebs of the gone, in spirit weaved.
Linger about them in humility,
And leave thyself to the upturning mood,
And thou'lt be swathed in the eternities

Whose outward shreds have pass'd :—
In temples, when
The organ rolls its breath in volumes round
The pillar'd galleries, and woman's voice
Out of the tumult like a rocket shoots,
And into the big music comes again
In bells of falling melody. Their creeds?
The undercurrent of them all is thine,
And earnest hearts can hear the stream's deep tone
Beneath the surface clamour of the foam :—
In crowded streets, where we may best throw off
Our self-oppression and be most alone,
Catching the varied mind that passes by—
Now moved to inward laughter, now to tears :—
In summer, when the sultry day lies down
At noon to rest, lull'd by the hymn of bees,
And all things tarry for a drowsy hour
Till she arise to go along with them.
In that noon hour, when all things are at stand,
Thou mayest pass beyond them and behold
Glimpses of that they tell us of, but hide :—
In winter, when the snow coats hill and plain,
And all green things have crept in from the cold,
And farm-stead noises beat across the fields,
And the cracking ice chinks in the stony delf,
And the hard blue air is full of tinkling sounds,
And under all the faint and far-off hum
Of coming Spring, moving within the earth;
When in blank trees the spirit is not dead
But works an unseen change—look in and know :—

In children's eyes, ere yet the I, the ME,
Has swum within them, and whilst yet we may,
Unwearied, gaze into their azure wells
And see no mote of earth, but all the soft
Infinitude of heaven that engulfs
The gazer's soul in depths of skyey light :—
In books that so bewilder and perplex
The brain with multiplicity. Shut out
Their number for the time : one master-book
Disposes to the influx of All Thought,
Doing the thing that numbers can but do.
The thought lives not on pages but in space ;
The printed characters mysteriously
Open the mind's pores and the thought flows in.
And may not books—our idolizèd books—
Be but the anvil sparks of beaten soul—
The left materials of wondrous work,
That please a child more than the work itself?
The maker of a book has the great good,
The reader only gleans a gather'd field.
All work yields up its wealth to him that works ;
It will not be transferr'd, and therefore books
Are but our stepping-stones into the mines.

I see no heaven beaming in that eye !
O if thou still art lost and blindly grope,
Thy vision dark amidst excess of light,
Go to the desert where God's awful rest
Is on the fetter'd air, and nothing but
Blank rocks can bide the unutterable pause ;

Go with a mind as naked as the rocks,
All memories stript off, all shreds of creeds—
A very child, unswaddled as from God,
But with thy garner'd consciousness of Thought,—
And that which thou hast ever fail'd to find,
Will, as the light finds out the dark, find thee,
And gather as a dawn into a day,
And be thy Light—be thee, as light is day.

IV.

Through all my years of waken'd thought I've been
Haunted in spirit by a sullen grief,
Which sleeps, or is not heard, amid the move
Of work or strife; but, like the owl i' the tow'r,
Hoots out within me in my twilight hours,
Or when some cloud brings on a fancied night
And makes unnatural pause to earth and soul.

And I have thought this brooding trouble came
Out of my life's misfortunes; or arose
From conscious errors—duties left undone,
Returning on me, crying to be done;
Or from my heart's poor weaknesses that leave
A festering spot in memory. And I
Have labour'd to outreason this and that—
To make my heart pure, and to pluck and prune
Weeds and unwholesome growths. I thought, as each
Seem'd to infect my life, if this one thing
Were wrung out of my blood, O I could breathe
Freely the air of peace, and nothing else
Could choke my joy again. And so it was,
That when with pain and struggle I could drag
My grief out to the light, and drive 't away,
My being open'd all its cells and drew

A deep long draught of joy, that seem'd to exhaust
The bluest clefts of heaven—one glad breath !—
But when I look'd into myself again,
Alas ! my ghost was there in another shape.
I had but dragg'd to light an effect, the cause
Pass'd through my grasp, like air—a ghost indeed !

It haunts a house deserted—haply one
That has not yet been fill'd. There is, I know,
A Presence in whose life all phantoms die.

Thou say'st that God is ever everywhere :
But if He be not in my *consciousness*,
He's not in *me*.—There is a twofold life—
The life we *all* have, and the life with God,
Which few, or none on earth, partake in full.
Yet is a human soul the only thing
That can receive that God-life ; and for this
It is immortal. Had we never known
The light of that existence, we had lived
Contented in our blindness and the dark.
I have but seen enough to know my want—
My only want ; for that, supplied, supplies
All other wants of the soul, or makes them none.
And, like a dungeon'd prisoner, I've groped
Around my years of night to find the dawn :
The faintest glimmer piercing through my cell
Has fill'd me with the liberty of day.

I have been very lonely ! I have shunn'd

What we name *company* to be less lone,
And sought my comfort in the wilds. But not
All times to find: for I have gone and come
Bewilder'd as a day of mist and cloud,
That sets in night without one beam of sun,
Or patch of blue, to tell that Heaven is.—
And I have shunn'd the duties of my day
As waste of soul, and envied nobler art—
Forgetting that the *artist* gives his work
The stamp of its nobility. The gods
Are with us in our sphere: accomplish *that*—
We cannot choose but step into a higher.
Though Cromwell was a king by right of brain,
He won his sceptre with a captain's sword.

The duties God assigns me I would leave
For those assign'd to others; therefore stand
Powerless between. Heaven's ends will not be moved
Save in accomplish'd act. I have not learn'd
To know God's features in my daily work,
Else were it all-sufficient—it alone.
The food each labouring spirit needs the most
Is in its nearest duty—beauteous growth
Of the eternal being in the act.
For Right and Duty, Conscience and the Truth,
Are God's own breath, by which weak men have been
Inspired with a divinity of strength.

Ye who in spirit are not yet awake,
Dream while your night remains; for, soon or late,

The morn breaks sleep, and then farewell dream things—
The satisfaction of a plenteous board,
The joy of wine-cups, and the light exchange
Of surface friendships, rumours and vague thoughts;
Which vanish till again, in after time,
With a diviner meaning they come back.
The one sole want dawns on the awaken'd soul—
The want for God in all, and all in God—
This utter vagueness to the soul that sleeps;
But O how truly all in all, *he* knows
Who once has seen the Eternal. Life's unrest
Is his thereafter, till he grows to God;
But that unrest the token of his growth.

Therefore I argue not against my grief,
Which being Heaven-sent, leads back to Heaven.

V.

I sadden when amid the stars I look—
And think the earth is only one of them.
Imagination soars beyond all ken,
Yet is no nearer to an end of stars.
Away into the painful deeps of space
Oppressèd thought speeds on its endless way,
But still unnumber'd worlds lie all around,
And this globed earth becomes a winking point,
Unmark'd, unknown from millions of the same.

And so I cannot look amid the stars,
And link the earth as one upon my vision,
But straight a blighting sadness on me falls:
I lose all faith in man's high destiny,
More than may well belong to a race of ants;
And nothing can I see for him in time,
But eat and sleep that he may live and work,
Then die that he may make room for another.
O, there is nothing else! What *could* there be
For him who is but an atom of a whole—
A grain work'd in amongst the myriads
That make the solid rock?

But whilst I heave
My sadness on the night, the stars, like eyes—

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Most earnest, pitying eyes—beweep the lie
That festers in my brain. Ye pulsing stars!
We revel nightly in your nectar'd light
Until we reel in joy like drunken gods:
Ye flood us into trances with your beauty;
But are ye *conscious* of the power ye own?
Constant and true ye are; but do ye crave
For ever, as do we, *more* of God's truth?
Have ye a sense of *duty?* Know ye aught
Of *right* and *wrong?* Dream ye of buried time,
Or brood ye, prophet-like, on years unborn?
Ah, no! Ye roll out innocent as tears
Upon the cheek of Night, and have no sense
Of that emotion out of which ye came—
No feeling of the light that in you gleams.
Ye have no heart-eye, blear'd with the regret
Of wasted years, wild wandering in the Now,
Or radiant with the orient dawn of hope.
There is in you no show of comprehension:
Brighter than eyes ye are, yet want perception.

Then why should we who have all these be sad,
And feel ourselves eclipsèd by the stars?
Earth, thou'rt a star, yet art beneath our feet:
Man is thy lord, and thou his vassal nurse:
And all the proud orbs of the arching sky
Bow down to his high thought.—I am not sad,
Nor feel I now the glory of the stars
Oppress and dwarf me into littleness:
Believing, this that sees and comprehends

Is greater than that seen and comprehended.

Believing? Thou must *know* and *feel* that truth :
Believing only, and repeating thus
The thoughts that are as old as poet's song,
Will never make thee greater than the stars ;
And thou art dead as they, unless that truth
Be in thy soul as blood is in thy frame.

VI.

The ways are closed upon me. When I try
To get admittance to the busy mart,
No one hears what I say, and straight a wall
Runs up about me; buyers and sellers pass,
But no one asks me—Will I buy or sell?
And when the day grows dusk, and cheery groups
Wear off, well pleased, a good day's business done,
None asks me—Will I go? I have no key
To fit the lock of any of their hearts.
Duck-like they breast the world's tide and float on,
Sleek and unruffled. If *I* tempt the stream,
I fall into some eddy and am drawn
By hidden currents back against the feathers.
Our meetings, too, at nights, disgorge me up
The same unalter'd thing. That gastric juice,
That mellows all their natures into chyme,
Slimes me but works no chemical effect.

The meanest thing should have a way on earth,
Have *I* not mine? Ah! when that mid-day sun
Shall, like an after-dinner alderman,
Full-faced and flush'd with wine, wink in yon west,
And eve's one star come through the gauzy light
To tend like loving wife her winey lord—

Who like ripe fruit drops heavily to bed—
And kneeling on the earth she gives her soul
To Heaven in a flood of glowing prayer,
And quietly beside her lord lies down,—
O then my hour is come!—I move as light
That has its time and orbit. With the stars
My way is through the night. Our light is pale
And dim and distant to the earth; but earth
Knows not the glow we have amongst ourselves:
The fogs that hide us are not ours but hers.

God lights both stars and souls; their glory is
Their measure of His being. Who would shine
In His full light must tarry like the stars
And bide God's time—not in hibernal coil,
But with a watchful soul laid bare to Heaven,
And in a ceaseless prayer, drinking in
The light that moves him onward to his rise.

No one, however dim, is wholly dark;
For life and darkness cannot be in one.
But whoso, charmèd with another's blaze,
Would also be of that peculiar hue,
Draws in a borrow'd light that dwarfs his own.
He is the garner of another's wealth,
To be repaid with interest, beggaring him.

Thou see'st that heaven of stars! Not man, the race—
The multitudinous, crowded, scatter'd race—
Seems more confused, more purposeless than that.

Yet each particular orb has its own course,
And threads the ambiguities of space
Unerringly, because moved by the Law
That shaped its course and it, and is to it
Necessity of movement. Fretful soul—
Fretful because of freedom—thou shalt know
That under thy free gift lies that same Law :
It is thy root of being, grows in thee,
And will press out that freedom, which is but
Thy present mode of growth and source of ill.
The time will be when we shall pace the heavens
In glorious constellations like the stars ;
Blissful as they, but conscious of our bliss ;
Moved only by necessity of Right,
Which is the highest reach of a free soul.
The time *will* be hereafter—*might* be now,
Did we obey the tide of that deep Will
Beneath the turbid currents of our own,
And take with joy the motion that it gives.

My disobedience drives me to the night :
My way should not be with the stars alone :
The same deep spirit that bears up the dark
Brings in the living day, and bides all day
Amidst the ways of men. If I have not
Found what I sought in them, have been like one
Breathing an element that gives no life,
It was for want of truer seeking : Thou,
The life of *all* the elements, wast there—
The life that in defeat gives victory,

And gain in loss.—I will not shun the field
Of this world's battle: if I may not ride
Proudly with shining helm and nodding plume,
On the topmost surge of deeds, I will, unmark'd,
Pass through it like a spirit, as Thou dost;
Be with the stout hearts in the cloud of war,
And help them to Thy bosom when they fall.

VII.

When we two were dear friends I sway'd between
God and the World. It, with its ceaseless round
Of precept and example, pull'd me on,
And daily grew in force. The Spirit Soul
That lies unseen and trodden in the dust,
Came only when the World would throw me off—
In solitude and sorrow came and whisper'd—
"The World hath thrown thee off, but thou hast fallen
On that which doth the giddy World bear up.
The surge hath cast thee down, but thou hast found
The deep sea's rest. The surge itself but frets
To find a rest like thine: it looks above,
In envy of yon heaven's quiet blue,
And scrambles to get up:—ah, witless surge!
That ceaseless climbing lengthens thy unrest;
Thou must at last return into the deep
Still bosom of thy being; peace is there—
The unfathom'd peace that can alone be thine.
Yon blue serenity does not exist,
Save in the eye's delusion: when the hand
Draws near to take the bliss, it is not there."
Thus would the Spirit voice, but again the din
Of rolling day would deafen me, and my heart
Would follow in the pageantry of day;
Deeming the voice that spake had been my own,

Hanging sour grapes in the World, heaping down
On the hard relentless ground to break my fall,
And turning failure to commodity—
The last shift of weak hearts. And so the World
Would have me all again : its pageantry
Became the only real—all else dream :
What eyes and hands can grasp take thou and live :
Nothing there is behind this show but death.

Once-friend, it's well we are no longer friends,
But hate each other—O how much we hate !
As much as e'er we loved in olden time,
When all the ground-work of our natures lay
In keeping, like the bases of two cones
Together laid, and meeting in all points.
The figures are reversed ; the broad affections
That friendship builds upon, lie in us both
All on the offturned sides that cannot touch ;
And we that in our fitness were as one,
Now meet but in one point—and that is *hate.*

Yet say I it is well ; else thy gilt course,
With the authority of added years,
Had drawn my wavering, undecided step,
And given me smooth progression in thy wake.
I had been still sway'd in my old unrest,
Or all bought over to a faithless peace.
But came the sudden, unprepared-for throe
That heaved us from each other. Had the chain
That bound us in our love withstood that wrench,

Then more than ever had we been one heart.
I will not say with whom the weakness was—
Although I have my thought—but snapt a link
That never can be welded. Our next love
Must forge itself a chain to bind us with.

It was the whole upheaving of our natures ;
And gather'd years were scatter'd to the blast.
We rock'd in peace upon one tide ; a wave
That raked the ocean deeps rose up between,
And in two currents broke. One took in-shore
Into the crisping bay where streamers flaunt
From idly cabled ships, and summer friends
Come wooing the mild air ; and with it thou
Went proudly on, hail'd by the summer friends.
The other took me like a prey, and drove
In triumph out to sea. A lesser force
Could not have cross'd the bar, had left me there
To wreck amongst the breakers ; but this met
And bore them down. In the meeting crash methought
The face of heaven was blurr'd, and I engulf'd
As in a horrid dream : but soon I woke,
Not *from* but as it seem'd *within* my dream—
Not to old life, but into a new birth.
It was the passing into that deep sea
Which is the under-being of all things—
The deep calm it, and they the curling waves
That ever and anon are lost in it.
The things I held to as stabilities,
Now thaw'd away ; and that faint ghost-like thing

That came of old and comforted my woes,
Was a still inlet of the unfathom'd deep
That now lay more reveal'd; it was no ghost
Of a night-shrouded brain, which morning's sun
Would scorch into its grave, but the up-reach
Of that deep Life, whereof the universe
Itself is but the ghost.

There is no heart
That is not penetrated with that Life:
Our Heaven is as the fulness of our share;
And he of scrimpèd measure cannot see
The bliss of him whose full cup overflows.
That which he has he takes and never doubts,
But calls him mystic who has more than that,
Him purblind who has less. There comes to all
A deep sense of the *true*—itself its proof:
Doubt has no wedge-room when the inflow comes:
It carries its own warrant like plain sight,
And he that sees believes. Therefore I rest
In this blue deep, nor cast one wistful look
Back to the shallows of a doubtful shore.—
Day after day waves up the beach of time,
With ceaseless chafe and melancholy note
To him that is time's slave: but to the ear
That lays its hearing in the eternal sea,
Comes not the fretted murmur of the days.

We may not search our nearest brother's heart,
Nor sound the secret fathoms of his soul;

And thou, dear enemy, art not reveal'd
In all thy depth to me. But certain winds
Have blown thy heart's throbs hither, and I know
Thou are not yet at peace: the World still spurs
Thy bleeding sides; thou may'st not shake it off;
For if it probes thy flank, it pats thy neck—
A coaxing cruel rider that *will* take
His hire out of the poor hack's blood and bones.

We are reversed in everything but hate:
But *thy* hate comes from the right side for me,
And if I curse thee, it is with deep thanks.
That bar of hatred that between us lies,
I've beaten on the anvil of my heart
Till now methinks it turns to love—red hot.
We'll grow to love each other for the heart
We put into our hate. Friendship suspects:
In open enmity what chance of guile?
We know each other true in our dislike,
And have no dread of falseness. When we meet—
As meet we shall upon another stage,
Where each shall bear to view the alphabet
Of his most inward life—and when we read
How step by step throughout this little war
Was taken and mistaken—tracing back
The thing to its first germ—ah then, the first
Of all our quarrel will be as the seed
From which the fruit-tree sprang—that seed not found.
And when we note how true we both have been

To our own sense of right, what then but love
And admiration for that thoroughness?—
In this faith let us live—love even now:
How else than thus can enemies be loved?

VIII.

I could not think what gave her that fine beauty,
Until I saw her dead; for in her face
There was no line a sculptor would have prized:
And yet methought all heaven was in that face!
I could not look into it and retain
A single hold of earth: and when I gazed
Within her eyes they drank out all my soul,
And left me as a statue, with the gleam
Of adoration in its stony front.

But when I saw her dead upon her bier,
I turn'd with loathing, and I could have rush'd
Down from this upper earth into my grave,
To be where she was not. Ill-favour'd thing!
O what a dream I've had that she was fair!
Either it was a dream, or that stretch'd form
Held nothing of the beauty I adored.—
That form was all one settled ashy hue;
No colour came and went, no wreathing thought
Moved o'er its pale pinch'd lips. I stole one look
Into its staring eyes;—they knew not me,
Nor spoke one thought—those eyes that had so oft
Enfolded all my soul within their lids.
I touch'd its cold cheek—God! my blood shrank back,
And stopp'd its pulses like a frozen brook.

There was no trace of that fine something there
That flow'd in all the motions of her being.

If that still form was *hers*, it was not *her :*
For through her frame there ran a wondrous speech
E'en when she spoke no word. External things
Leapt eagerly into her centring breast,
And came again all dripping with the dew
Of her new thought. And when she spoke, it seem'd
The utterance of a company of minds,
That even in condemnation gives support
To that which is condemn'd. Most erring souls,
When they approach'd her, could not hold their sins,
But, child-like, blabb'd them out, and came away
Ennobled and amazed to find what good
Sprang up when she took off their loads of sin.

Yet had she no great gift that one could see.
I thought it was her beauty that I loved,
And sat for whole hours pondering it. I saw
Two silver fountains welling in her eyes—
A constant flowing up of crystal thought
That kept them ever clear, though trouble stirr'd.
A dreamy summer day was in her hair ;
And fancies chased each other o'er her face,
Like skyey shadows o'er a field of grain.
And when I touch'd her hand, O then methought
I stood before the East at early dawn,
And saw the crowding beauty of the morn—
Young day still in its cradle of the sea

Rocking and dreaming—streaks of fringy light
That moved like curtains—and the lonely star,
Like a young mother watching the baby day,
With half her love on it, half on her lord
Coming from his far voyage in the east.
A poem fill'd her veins, and when she moved,
Listen'd, or read, or lifted up her eyes,
It lived along the surface of her being,
In wavy lines of beauty.

But she died—
Ay, even in the midst of all this beauty!
Whate'er it was that went—life, spirit, soul—
It took all with it, left not one fair shred.
The lines that hemm'd her living, hemm'd her dead
And still I looked for beauty, but could find
Only lost beauty's secret in dead lines.

IX.

If thou shouldst die, my little one!—This dread
Comes ever with the look thou gav'st me now.
It flashes through my thoughts, and then my heart
Shakes with the muffled thunder, and big drops
Fall from this cloud, my brain.—If thou shouldst die,
How blank to me were life! The round of life
Must ever have a centring point of love,
And thou art mine. Thou lost, I were unsphered.

I cannot form in thought thy loss, or see
How that which leaps and speaks through thy sweet frame
Should ever leave it; yet must feel it may;
Must feel that restless little bell, thy voice,
That keeps a jubilee within my heart;
Those little pattering feet that all the day
Like kittens gambol up and down the house;
And those pure eyes that open through to God,
Revealing to my gaze deep views of Heaven;
All, all that makes my little darling up,
May change and lie before me still as sleep!
Yet not with sleep's red roses on thy cheeks,
Budding all night, blooming at break of day;
Nor with the living dream within thy veins
That charms off the iconoclast, decay;

But like a pretty wreath of virgin snow
That melts the while we look, and by next morn
Is not to mortal eye.

My little one,
I harp upon this thought, and almost dream
Thou art already dead, and wear my heart
With the imagined grief. But, O deep joy!
I waken from my thought, and thou art here,
Sparkling beside me. O live on and be
The little fountain where I come at eve,
After the sweating day, to cool my brain.

Oft in the heat of strife will come the thirst
Of love upon me, and my parch'd heart sinks
Amid distasteful work. A sudden thought
Of thee, my little one, leaps in my breast,
And soon my heart is at its post again,
Slaked with this gush of love, and work is joy:
And sweet anticipations ebb and flow
Like waves within a bay, each higher up,
Until the full tide of my joy is reach'd
In clasping thee unto my flooded heart.

The homeliest soul will sicken of its home,
Seeing a wingèd cloud in the blue vault;
Or hearing through the city's maddening din
The abandon'd carol of a cagèd lark;
Or seeing primroses brought into town;
Or reading of dreamy isles in the sunny south,

Of marble palaces, Italian skies.
But when I wander and new scenes fill up
The circle of my thought, amidst them all
Comes ever and anon across my brain,
A sweep as if 'twere from a soft dove-wing;—
I pause—sweet heart! it is the thought of thee.
And then I feel, if not a present bliss,
Thou art to me the deep reservèd *hope*,
Which is the secret life of present bliss.

Come near, my Beautiful, and let me gaze
My soul all out into those beaming eyes,
Until I lose my being all in thee.
For is not love a losing of one's self
In that which is belov'd? Love feels no self:
For though it springs in self, yet, like a flower,
It lives not for the soil, but yields up all
Its breathing essence to the wooèd air.

It is not only grief that likes to weep
Itself out in lone tears. Sweet, I must hide
These coming drops of love, lest, wondering, thou
Shouldst ask, amidst thy prattle, what they mean.
Thou couldst not know they were for love, all love,
That are to thee tell-tales of hurt alone.

There, go and play, my darling,—I would read.
Alas! my book has gone out like a fire
In which a sunbeam strikes. I see no red
Thought burning in it. Newer light from God

Has fallen on my eyes and on my book,
And dazzled them to blindness. I have look'd
Into this lovely beam until my eyes
Are kindled, and can see nought but the light
That flames in it and them.

If it should set!
Alas, if thou shouldst die! And yet, sometimes
I think 'twere well for me thou didst die now,
And to the heaven of my memory
Pass with the morning dew upon thy head,
And be to me a fresh green thought for aye.
For I may lose thee quite if thou abide
To suffer living change. The hours drink out
The beauty of the morn: what charm'd us then,
We cannot find in all the after day.

I have lost many pets by living death,
And so might thee. The young of anything
Finds the most honey'd corner in my heart:
But if it stay until the streaks of dawn
Have parted from it one by one, ah then
My heart has lost its tenant, though it lives:
It has not even the ghost of that lost love
To haunt its desolate chambers, since the thing
Is still embodied and denies the ghost.
But drag it from my heart before its time,
E'en in affection's increase, with the glow
Of rising light upon it, and methinks
My heart could cease not to be haunted by

The sweet idea of the loved thing lost.

Sometimes this strange throe moves me: thou at hand,
And some suggestive weapon in my grasp,
I feel a pushing on to lift my arm
And slay thy life! I dare not fight the thought,
But drop the weapon like a coward and flee
From it and thee, chased by the hounding thought.—
If I could neither lay the thought nor flee,
But did the strange remorseful deed, O God!
What a terrific breaking up of soul
Would shake my frame! But then the drenching love!—
Like a black cloud I'd burst, nor cease to weep
Till I had rain'd myself into the grave
Beside my murder'd joy.—Dark sobbing cloud!
Wrapt up in thy own grief—all heaven around
Is blue as angel's eyes, and the glad earth
Sunny and green, save this one little spot
Made black by thee. But it too shall be green,
When thou hast water'd it with all thy tears.
My precious one, and could I wish thee dead—
Dead, that thou might'st escape the living death?
False wish!—O thou canst never die to me,
More than myself to myself: for I see much
Of that same self in thee; the lines that bank
Our beings in, have by one stream been mark'd;
And when thou liftest up those archèd brows
The light of my own soul looks out to me.—

The years can not estrange thee: though they roll
Thy budding youth all out and take thy bloom,
My heart will glory in the mellow fruit.
O thou art link'd unto me, blood and soul:
Thy change must have its parallel in me.

It is a cruel thing that love may be
On my side only; that a heart all warm
Must cleave unto another dead and cold,
And be unsightly as a growing branch
Upon a rotten tree. Pray God, my love,
That I, in life, may never die to thee;
For there the fear is most. Thou art too full
Of love's sweet essences for death to take;
And so I rest without the fear of loss.
But *I* am prone as ether to be lost
And disappear out of most loving hearts.

Let us maintain the integrity of love
By being true to ourselves. A leal whole heart
Is as abiding in love's firmament
As any star in heaven. Let us give
Clear vantage to the light that burns within,
And like the stars be clear unto ourselves.
They are not self-polluted—see, they shine
No dimlier for all the murky nights.
And this should be great joy—that we, each one,
Might be a world of beauty in ourselves,
Unstain'd by circumstance as stars by cloud:
For though they seem torn out of their high spheres,

Trampled beneath the plashy feet of storms,
Yet when the storm has fretted past, we see
They have been lying in unthought-of peace.

Give me thy little hand. How heavenly soft!
It has no feel of this world's hardening work,
And emblems thy young soul, which bears not yet
The hards of earth upon it.—Wherefore should
Our Innocents put off the charmèd life
Which manhood does but struggle to regain?
We cast off child-content, and then begin
A lifelong struggle for a child's content.—
Soft as it is, in this small hand I read
Lines prophesying burdens and earth-strifes.—
The azure innocence drops from thine eye:
Thou reck'st not of my augur. But my past
Gives me thy future now—and would, my love,
I might fore-bear the burden of thy griefs
And leave thee all the joys. Yet God forbid
That I should rob thee of thy jewel'd sorrows!—
I could not wish the past one grief the less,
But would my griefs had been more wisely borne,
And yielded more soul-treasure. I have found
My richest jewels in the hardest rock,
But spoil'd them oft in breaking it; lost more
Through leaving much unbroken. Like a bee
I've ever tried to avoid the stony road,
And sought the lanes to nestle among flowers.
But took not duty with me like the bee:
My task sat like a beggar in the dust,

Neglected, and a busy world pass'd on.

But, ah, sweet Ignorance! thou canst not take
The meaning from my lips: thy soft brows lift,
Thine eyes give out a recognizing glance,
Only at certain words, as *bee* and *flowers*,
Which fall like gleams of sunshine on thy brain,
Chased by immediate shade.—Yet is it known
The spirit has a deeper speech than words,
A hearing that receives unspoken thought.
Some presences are felt like a sweet air
Blowing upon our souls, some like hell's breath.
If either come amongst us we take on
The good or evil odour. Therefore thou
May'st thus take on the nature of my thought:
And inasmuch as these pangs of regret
Make strong my future self, so may they thee.
Doubt not the unspoken precept: it doth pass
From soul to soul as dawn upon the earth—
Not with forced light, but gently leads in day,
Which soon is all in all; and we can trace
No footmark of a struggle with the night.

But strength of me or precept thou need'st none:
They could but help to give that which thou hast—
Thy rich inheritance of child-content.—
I do but speak my overflow of love.
It does not wait my time: tide-like it comes.
It ebbs and flows between us, and each wave
Throws up its thousand pearls upon our hearts.—

The World doth hold us poor, and we ourselves
Oft join the World in *feeling* we are poor—
Poor! and with all this treasure in our hearts—
Wealth richlier possessed than gold could be!
To *have* is but to *love;* and he whose heart
Is fullest of the love of godliest things
Is still the richest man, what else he lack.—
This is the very alchymy of truth:
God keep it aye within us.—There now, love,
Go play thyself, and leave me here alone,
To open up the coffers of my heart
And count how rich I am in loving thee.

X.

I wonder when I'll die, and what will be
The circumstances that surround my death,
The immediate cause and nature of my end?
Whether some fierce disease on a sleepless bed
Watch'd by sad anxious eyes in which I'll read
My untimely epitaph before I go:—
Or slow consuming fire, that, day by day,
Smoulders within and makes no show of blight,
But wears the cheek of bloom, till, suddenly,
My unconscious path ends at a churchyard gate?—
I turn—too late! Death hems me in and points
Into his rank green fold, where I may count
The steps that lie between me and my grave?—
Or will some sudden accident cut short
My flooding tide of life, and I that left
A joyous home, waved on by blessing hearts,
All jocund as the morn, be carried back
A mangled, mindless corse? that home's dear mirth
Gulp'd up in one wild spasm of despair;
My little lambkins pressing round their dam
In wondering affright; the meal prepar'd
With tentful care, breathing of my return,
Left but to feed their anguish!—I am there,
But at no board sit down: sweet lives that clomb
About me, clustering like wreaths of flowers,

Crush'd by the stricken pillar they adorned!—
Or shall I ripen on to gray old age,
Losing by slow and unperceived degrees
My hold of love and life, enjoying both
Up to the last with all my room of heart,
Until it close, and I drop to my rest,
When home and hearts so flooded with me now,
Are either gone or fill'd with richer love,
And earth and I can spare alike each other?

Along the vista of a natural life
I gaze amidst dim shadows to its close,
And wonder if I'll travel to that close,
Or fall half journeyed in the chasmed way.
How darkly do we grope—thick dark ahead
That swallows up the glimmer from behind!
Each step is through a curtain of dense cloud.
Though light be on our feet, this present step
May edge the very brink of Death's dark pit.
We dare more than we know, and hearts would fail
If eyes could see the footing that we have.

How dear to each his little span of life!
Beggars and kings set on it the same price.
It stamps the gold of each: that life let out,
What then are regal crowns and raked-up pence?
Yet for some petty gain we risk that life
Which gives the worth we gain; or stake it on
Some sharp pin-point of honour—worth a pin.—
O full of contradiction! dear yet cheap!

At rustle of a leaf we start with fright,
And that dear life knocks wildly in our breasts,
As if it fear'd the falling of its house
And wanted out—and yet, 'twas but a leaf!
A trifling insult jostles our conceit,
And life becomes a button to toss up,
To see who'll lose or have it.

Is there aught
In this quick fear and sudden rush to save?
Is it a secret monitor that prompts
To cling to life because it is so short—
A tacit protest 'gainst the *immortal* life?
Or is there deeper truth in the mood that sets
Life cheaply on a straw—an inwrought sense,
Deeper than all our guesses, that comes up
And moves us to the ready risk of life,
Knowing, despite our fears, that loss of breath
Is not in very deed lost life, but *change*,
As sunset is no loss to the sunken sun,
Who even now reigns in as true a day
As when he fill'd the azure of our noon?

Which is the deeper truth—the one that moves
To fear and trembling in this hour of breath,
Lest it should briefly end? Or that which prompts
To lavishment and heedlessness of life,
As if our portion were the exhaustless air?—
And in what moods of being does each rise?

O ever in our lowest grades of sense,
Or when we use false shifts to bring about
Ends otherwise all good, or when our hearts
Are in the heaping up of cumbrous wealth,
We tremble for our safety and fear Death,
Lest it should come between us and our heaps,
Let fall the cloak that blinded our false shifts,
Or take us from the luxury of sense.—
But in our highest walks where Duty leads,
Not falteringly in doubt, but to the Right
Pressing still onward,—then is life itself
Sunk in the Right, and asks no separate care.
If Right be gulf'd in Death, Duty leaps in,
With eye full on the Right, but blind to Death.
The soul's integrity we buy with life,
And hold ourselves the gainers : yet if life
We had not after that, where were the gain?

Since, then, the mood we deem the most divine,
Gives suff'rance to the lightlying of life—
Which is this self, and gives the all we have,—
I hold the deeper truth is stirring here—
The truth that *Death* is but a form of speech,
And is no more the loss of life to the Dead
Than *sunset* loss of light to the sunken sun,
Who march'd as freely down this cloudless eve
As when he clomb the morn all pearl'd with dew.

O be our life unclouded, and our setting
Will not be streak'd with fears; nor will our path

On to that setting be a maze of doubt.
The sun draws up the vapours that obscure him ;
And doubts and fears are vapours of the brain :
The heavens are bright beyond. To a pure soul
No one may guess what clear insights would come.
Seek we the wholly pure in the present hour,
And as 'twill leave no dark past to bedim
The ever-starting memory with remorse,
So will it raise no further banks of cloud
To threat our journey with a weeping day :
And, living out the fulness of the Now,
The heart will have no room for a dreaded WHEN.

DUNFERMLINE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

XI.

My heart has choked me through this live-long day—
This day of duties closed. Each act of mine
To-day has been a death-pang: I have died
A former life in each. Our daily work
That we have done for years, O sad to feel
That this time is the last, and that to-morrow
Strange hands will take it up!

I shut the books
Whose each particular folio my hand
Can find without the exercise of thought—
The books that hold no character but mine.—
Now have I kiss'd the inkstand and the desk,
And given up possession of the key.
I look my last on each particular thing,
And see it draped in garments which my soul
Unconsciously has weaved. I did not think
How ivy-like my love had grown on them,
Till now I come to tear myself away.

How will it be with them when I have left?
Ah, shall I take away their mantling green,
And leave them bare and cold till they are clothed
With other verdure by a richer mind?
Will those whose custom 'tis to come and go

Feel desolation when I am not here?
I know there will be many, round whose hearts
My being throws its arms, as theirs round mine:
For we, without one word of plighted faith,
Have grown to know ourselves true brother men,
And wear our souls to each other in our eyes.
They will be haunted like an empty house;
My absence, like the passing of a ghost,
Will cross them when they see my accustom'd place.
Our wants, more than our havings, fill the mind,
And oft a thing's not ours till it is lost.

Farewell, old duties that I held as tasks
Not over-willingly perform'd! Now ye
Ascend to Heaven and are angels' work—
The higher, that you were most truly done,
Despite the unwillingness. For I have learn'd
To know how good a thing is tasteless work
When faithfully perform'd. The man transmutes
The meanest office to a golden reign,
Or blasts an angel's work with smoke of hell.
Men grieve their hearts at being out of place,
Unknowing that each man must place himself,
Not vainly fleeing from the post he holds,
But drawing round his feet the charmèd ring
That makes all sacred ground on which he treads.

We have to learn God's uses of the world,
And put our own aside like worn-out clothes.
Most of our business waits yet to be done

To yield the noblest fortunes. It is big
With mines scarce broken on. We have been fool'd
With coin, bright coin, that bears the current stamp,
But is not gold. We have not known the gold :
We have not known that in the ways of trade
The soul might be ennobled and enrich'd—
Yea, that this is God's very use of trade.—
Let us begin our business to this end—
This end so strangely missed ; if gained, not prized.—
I go to make my fortune ; and the world
Will count me poor, unfortunate. How rich
I may be even then, the Heavens will know.

Farewell, old duties ! Wherefore do I leave
Your sweet content—content now that I leave ?
Have I drunk all the sweets ye held for me,
And am—not knowing—even at the dregs ;
So that my further draughts were bitterness ?
Or, with accomplish'd difficulty, did
Your true life pass away, and leave me nought
To garner in my soul when that was gone—
Nought but the soft and soul-corroding ease ?
I ask my weeping heart, Why does it leave ?
It has no answer : like a drooping girl,
It leans against my breast and points to Fate.
O heart, I see so little of myself
In the beginning of my life's chief acts,
That I begin to think there is a hand,
Behind the scenes, that moves us to the stage,
Then leaves us there to play our parts.

And now
I stand behind the curtain that divides
Two acts in my life's drama. I can hear
The dense hum of the audience that will watch
Each movement of my acting. But I stand
Alone here with my throbbing heart and God.
This interval of pause is like a pool
That breaks the onflow of a brawling stream;
And, gazing deep into the abyss of life,
I see the sands of time o'er which it runs,
With all the purposes of life reveal'd
Like pebbles at the bottom of the pool,
Which in the turbid current are not seen;
And under all the great clear eye of God
Like the blue sky reflected.—O my heart!
Would I might shape thy beating all for God,
That when again I come in the World's gaze,
His eye may be the only one I feel.

The doubts of coming time, the sad and sweet
Regrets of a sublimed and hallow'd past,
Divide my brooding mind as hence I go:
They crush the present out. But if God's light
Abided in my soul and never set,
My present were an all-sufficing Now.
For he that lives for ever in that light
Partakes of all its attributes—regrets
No good outlived, nor dreads the ill unborn,
But in the abundant present breathes full life.

O, there are blessed lives on which God show'rs
His spirit down like rain ; more blessed ones
Through which He is a never-failing stream ;
And both are rich and bounteous as green meads.
With me the springs are buried deep in earth ;
And would I drink the spirit, I must dig,
And oft be disappointed. For the most,
My life's an arid waste, panting with thirst,
Which nothing but the living stream may quench.

Farewell, aunt England ! I have been caress'd
In thy kind lap of Lancashire so long,
That now I'll scarcely know the Doric voice
Of my old mother Scotland, and shall feel
That going home is going most *from* home.
Thou art my heart's home, England. When I look
Into the *camera* within my brain,
I see the moving picture of thy woods,
With all their sylvan glades, rich waste of fields
That give free crossing to th' exploring foot ;
Thy warm green lanes, and hedges thickly laced
With bramble, honeysuckle, and sweet dog-rose ;
Thy wandering streams, that lead through bosky dells
And meads of rarest green.—But most of all
The Ribble winds herself about my heart ;
For, from her cradle in the hills of York
Down to her green grave in the Irish Sea,
I know her every winding, and can tell
Where be her fords and bridges. That last bridge,
That spans near where her meady lips grow salt

With immemorial courtship of the tides—
O, memory! the river of my heart
That bridge will span until it cease to flow;
And those black eyes that lighted me like lamps,
Night after night, across it—still will dash
Their light athwart the dark nights of my soul,
And strike a fitful glare when memory's cloud
Obscures my present and diviner light.

Ah, was it vain to woo and not to win?
And, after dreaming years of love, to wake
And count my object better lost than won?

It was not vain: my object was not lost;
But rather gained by loss, since still for me
She is the gorgeous picture that love drew,
Undimm'd by the possession. Those dream'd years
Stand rounded in my past, not broken up
By dire reality. I can go back
Into them as a temple, and bow down
Before the image love has glorified,
And drink the joy of worship.

Dost thou think
She was not worthy of a bended knee?
Love sanctifies a thing of little worth;
And he that worships the recipient
Of his most sacred passion, worships well.
The cup that holds the precious wine of love,
Is even to be prized for that it holds.—

O, I have pour'd my love into her heart!
As in a fount, it well'd up in her eyes;
But all came back again to her own breast,
And but the beggar's portion came to me:
Yet am I richer for it to this day.

Our errors seem all purposeless as weeds;
But they are weeds from which the quiet soul
Distils a balm that medicines our lives.—
There is a wise assimilating power
Within the mortal frame, that works and builds
Without decree of ours, and from the wide,
The universal bosom, draws the store
That makes the individual—not alone
From that we bring to it, as daily bread,
But air, light, heat, and things we know not of:
So in the mind there is a kindred power—
By us unwill'd as that which moves the heart—
And years that we think lost have been work'd in
Most richly through our natures. Who can say
What serves our Being most? Oft, like the beasts,
'Twill turn away from dainty things we give,
And crop a thistle.—I have labour'd much
To bring unto my soul the richest food,
Laid up great store of books, have sought wise friends,
And hanker'd after churches. Yet when done,
I find me nibbling at life's poison'd weeds,
Or battening on barrenness; my books
Shelved and not open'd yet; wise friends, when found,
Deserted; and the church door never cross'd.

Our nature is above us; we may think
We educate ourselves; but we forget
This higher nature educates the *we*.

Farewell again, sweet land—my second home!
Within thy beds of roses I have known
The thorn more than the rose, but could not see
How bee-like I have been in gathering
These loads of honey'd love that clog my flight.—
My heaven was dull and leaden till I near'd
The margin of my setting:—I am gone,
And scarcely can I think yon golden sky
Is that which I have left. Shine on my back;
For I have turn'd me to another day;
And though I look through mist into the dawn,
The day will brighten, and the larks will sing.

XII.

I marvel not that, in the ignorant time,
Men gave each element its god, and crouch'd
In spirit as in frame, when through their woods
Fire like a demon ran; or when the wind
Beat on their sheltering bields, and with the rain
Grappled to death; or when the thunder spoke
In answer to the sign the lightning made,
Causing gruff discontent among the hills.—
This black and fiery warfare rushing through
The accustom'd quiet of their blue ceil'd earth—
What wonder they deem'd spirits were abroad!
Was not wild motion life? big noises speech?
To them they were; and deeplier to us
So *should* they be—*all* motion, and *all* sound.
For Soul is there, though too familiar thought,
Incrusted with the daily use of names,
Becomes dead thought and misses it. And things—
Not only the imperious elements,
But common work-world and domestic things—
Have all their own peculiar and quaint tongues,
By which, unseen, we know them. Is it soul
In them that speaks to soul in us? or what?
"A silly question," sayest thou? But think!
The sound of things inanimate is speech—
Of sentient origin. What else is sound?

Thou canst not tell though thou exhaust all speech.
And *motion*, thou may'st call it *force*—dead force:
But, whether 'tis the swoop of giant storms,
Or fairy dimple on a dreaming lake,
Still say I, it is life. Else, how receive
In our life-veins the pulses from without
That make us one with Nature? Day and night,
That ever through us come in throbs of beauty;
Sunshine, and shadow, and the breezy grass;
The woods that nod in slumber, or awake
To throw their tresses loose upon the wind:
The raking clouds that drive athwart the moon;
The wandering sea that never finds a home:
The lake that never leaves one; and the rivers
That come from rural poverty, like youth,
To push their lives in cities and grow rich—
Yea, very rich, but troubled, in their deeps:—
Why speak these to our life, if they have none?—
That river's soul runs through me! I could be,
With little change, its worshipper, O God!
But that it flows from Thee, and Thou hast all.

I *should* live in a world of active duty—
My wants demand it. But my heart repines,
And leaves me to a world of idle thought,
Or that of outer Nature—the mere change
Of day and night and season, sun and moon:
Or vagrant fancy, or the fool's desire
For other place than this which is his own.—
A patch of blue in heaven, a pacing cloud,

A sun-gleam, or the carol of a bird,
Makes beggars of my duties, and they plead
In vain—although with God's own voice they speak.

To day there is a tumult in the air,
A roaring as of furies in the bay,
A rumbling as of heavy toothèd wheels
Up there within the chimney; window panes
Batter'd and dim with gusty blads of rain;
The very wind seems roll'd in sheets of rain,
The houses dash'd, the steeples drench'd, the streets
Pelted and plash'd, and fill'd with runnels brown.
But, loud o'er all, the tumult in the air,
The roaring as of furies in the bay!
There had been eerie whistlings over night,
And wailings on the house-tops, which ran through
Our weird unblessèd dreams. Ere we awoke,
The storm had also come into our dreams;
So that my spirit out of sleep was borne,
E'en on the storm's wing; and, for very joy
In this rough day, it cannot light again
Among the working homes. Yea, I have come
To find it here upon this bellowing strand,
And sent my duties to fill up the debt
That runs to mortal ruin. Let them go—
I do not like them; they oppress my soul:
It has not room to breathe in them. Behold!
On this wave-welter'd shore, in wind and rain,
How freely beats the heart! how near it feels
To that in Nature beating! For I stand

Within the pressure of great agencies
That come by It impell'd. The broken heavens
Drag almost to the sea, and landward rush,
With terror stricken, like a routed host.
The waves, white crested, and with yells of war,
Pursue them :—one last dash at flying heaven !—
They only plunge and tumble on the shore,
Crest-fallen and disappointed.

But the roar
Comes most from yonder heads that bluffly stand
Knee-deep i' the sea, and sentinel the bay.
The rout comes round them, swept on wind and wave ;
And hark ! the storm's wild throat—too high for bass—
Has crack'd its voice upon them, and 'tis shrill,
Air-rending, as a trumpet. Not a sail,
Or any human shadow, moves within
That circuit of dim air and weltering sea ;
But out beyond the curtain of thick drift,
How many well reef'd barks and stout-braced hearts
Now stand at bay i' the storm ! A lonely bird
That seems far blown and driven from the deep,
Hoary and sea-like, glides around my head,
And gazes into me with strange pale eyes—
Most melancholy eyes ! Be still, my heart !
And yet those eyes, how painfully near they come !
And those long spectral wings !—Why did I wince?
It put me in a circle, in a spell,
And shut all else from eye and ear. But see !
The lonely bird beats windward out of sight ;

Its spell breaks, and again the welt'ring sea,
The trumpet-sounding cliffs, the wind and rain
Leap through these senses into me.—

O God!
We know not by what miracle the soul
Receives into itself the outer world:
But in such gleams of beauty does it come,
Methinks it is its spirit we receive—
In very deed 'tis Thee! God, give me work
In which my fitness and Thy glory meet,
As in this vagrancy they seem to do;
Or as we see in the *commission'd* men;
And it shall have my knee, my hand, my heart,
My toiling days,—ay, and my sleepless nights;
Which neither toil nor weariness could feel,
With me the chosen one to do their work,
And Thou in all their hours. O grant me this!

The tempest has God's voice to-day: I feel
My words are driven back into my throat;
The tide keeps frowning on me to go back,
And foot by foot it claims the beach; the wind
Takes the salt spray and blows it in my eyes:
My very thoughts are beaten back: the day
Seems all a driving back. O God of day!
Thou hear'st the faintest breathing of a soul
Rising through all the tempest. If that soul
Deem not the after-stirrings come from Thee,
As answer, to console or to command,

But that itself creates them, it were well
To audience them as if they came from Heaven,
And soon they will approve themselves. For truth
Is not imagined; it has been with Thee
In all eternity: and when it comes,
It carries its own proof in needing none.

God takes unnumber'd tongues. The elements
Have bidden me to whence I came.—
You dream!
The outward fact was still the inward dream
Until men saw it clearly. All may see
Alike the face of things: but pierce the skin,
And seek their spirit with the inward eye,
Then who shall say to any one "You dream"?
As who can say the loved do not possess
That beauty which their lovers see in them:
The deeper truth to the intenser sight?
In things dissimilar to other eyes
The Poet shows a likeness, then all eyes
Can see how like they are. Nor is his view
The final. There's a meaning in each thing
That fills all depths of vision up to God's;
And all are satisfied till vision deepens
And wants the deeper.

That which starts a thought—
If only by suggestion—*speaks*, since mind
Had, but for the suggestion, miss'd the thought.
And had not Nature first reveal'd her truths,

Mind were as empty as a cast-up shell,
With one eternal sound of vacancy.

I pray'd God give me nobler work! The storm
Straight seem'd to bid me back to that I left;—
And how God answers prayer, who shall say?
The duties which a man at any time
May find before his hand, are wholly his,
Though all the world cry, *How unlike the man!*
In them, or in the cause that made them his,
His double will be found, his inner self,
Whose outward haunting gives him never peace,
Till in fulfilment it find wholesome life,
Or rest in honest failure.—Wouldst thou find
Thy heart's elected work, pass through, not round,
The task that even error has made thine.
For in the midst of uncongenial toil,
E'en by the way of doing it, a man
May raise the office that he longs to fill.—
No man may shape the world to suit himself:
But—form'd his own heart's model—let him work
At anything, and we shall see how soon
It draws about a man a fitting garb.

And this, or nothing, from the Day's rude throat
I could translate—this when my inward ear
Would listen: when it closed, the outward shell
Took nothing but the hoarseness of the Day.
And thus all things speak inwardly—they speak
Like oracles, that seem to disappoint,

Because we take the outward meaning only.—
A King was prophesied, surpassing all
Earth's former kings in glory. When He came,
No one believed the meek and lowly man
Of Nazareth, in very truth was He.
So when we seek high missions, and are told
They wait us in the drudgery despised,
Who is it has the faith to find them there?

XIII.

Scotland, my Mother! thrice I've left thy hearth
To seek my crust 'mong strangers—left each time
Alone, in sadness, never to return,
Yet, by some fate undreamt of, still return'd.

When shall this heart find an abiding home?
Alas! too many has it found—heart-homes,
Loved spots where it has been, and fain would bide—
But none for me! Ah, where the homestead, where
The kindred soil in which my tendrill'd years
Might spread and deepen on to rooted age—
Green shoots up-springing, and all things around
Engraven with my life, until they read
As pages of my history? But no:
I see no dawn of that—blank dark all round!

Once more I leave the Doric land—this time,
A part that rings with glorious deeds of old:
Kyle's capital, made famous by the lives,
To Scotland dear, of Wallace and the Bruce,
And where even England's Cromwell graved his name.
But O, more glorious by the minstrel chief
Who sang of *Tam O'Shanter* and the *Brigs*,
And whose heart-warbled melodies have borne
The *seuch* of Coila's streams o'er all the earth.

O favour'd land, whom Providence has given
Not wealth of beauty only, but a voice
To sing it to the world—farewell, farewell !

'Tis but my lips that say that word, my heart
Bids no farewell, and could not if I would.
No : be my outward being where it may,
While memory, and thought, and Burns remain,
I live in Kyle. Still, in the summer eve
My soul will wander by the "*Hermit Ayr*"—
At noon sit dreamily by "*Bonnie Doon*"—
"*Brown Carrick hill*" fill all my musing moods
With its mysterious beauty—and yon isle,
With *Goatfell*, framed in sunsets. Hill and dale,
And river, bridge and road where *he* has been,
Live in a double glory—in their own,
And in the light of that impassion'd eye :
For God, who breathes the miracle of beauty,
Gives to the Poet the creative soul
That makes a beauty kindred to His own.

If not my first, thou art my dearest home.
And where my next ? I leave, but whither go ?
I blush to think there is for me no place
That begs my work ; but, rather, that mere bread
May lead me like a beggar ! Would my faith
In *missions* were confirm'd—that for each one
Throughout the ravell'd labours of the world,
His special work awaited him ! I'd rise
Like morning, with hope's star upon my brow,

And feel earth beckon'd me. The world accords
Divine appointment to her greatest sons,
Who turn her destinies by arm or pen :
But wherefore not the least? In sight of God,
Who are the greatest? And what acts of man,
Little or great, most pregnant of results?
The flash that leaps from heaven fills all men's eyes,
But with amazement passes; while the spark
That falls unseen from some lone widow's lamp
May fire a city. Fields are won and lost,
Run red with blood, their thousands heap'd in death,
Yet in a little while are green again.
A lonely thinker gives the world a thought,
Which in due season overruns the earth,
Brings wealth to nations, bread to all that work.
A ten years' war rose from a woman's cheek ;
A Reformation, from a *cutty stool.*
The veriest acts work an eternal change,
And none can tell the outcome.

All, or none,
Have special missions waiting them from God,
And here, or somewhere in this endless life,
Must find them. None so worthless, none,
But, like the pettiest artery, performs
A necessary part amid the whole.
Not Shakspeare only, but the multitude,
Gave birth to Shakspeare's universal line.
So, Washington was but the brain whose strength
Drew upwards from the obscurest heart that beat

With Independence. Take the least away,
And Washington had not been Washington.—
God's thoughts are circles: lives, things, and events
That *we* deem useless, are the arcs which, join'd,
Make up the round.

Shall even the trees put forth
Each its appointed leaf and bloom and fruit—
The birds and insects live and build and sing—
All in their own unerring way—yet man
Be left to blind experiment and doubt?
They are God's slaves, and cannot err,
While man, you say, is free! Ay, so he is;
And therefore often misses his true end.
Yet is he only free within the bounds:
Error and wrong cannot be driven far:
On one side only is there endless scope,
And that is towards the right, the true, the good;
And he alone that is God's willing slave
Is truly free—yea, even free as God.

The conscience-beat of Right that stirs amid
The conflicts of the heart—this is God's will.
It bids us to our missions: we are deaf;
Or, hearing, heed not, and still live at waste,
In half successes, disappointing gains,
Failures and fears, that seek to whip us right.
Who thinks of missions? None. Yet even we—
You, I—might find our God-appointed work,
Would we but rise in His name and begin.

There ever is a Right, a Best to do,
Here where we are, and now. In simple trust
Do that, and ever that, nor mind results.—
To make thy life an embodied thought of God—
Be it all failure in the world's loose speech—
That, only, is success—how done or where.

And whence the love of home, this heart for place?
Not from the dusky grandeur of the hill,
The clouding tree before the cottage door,
The haunting stream—no, nor the mantling hearth;
But that through them, unconsciously, the heart
Has caught the gleam of God; and that is *love.*
It is the very home of every soul,
And everything in nature is the door.

If we by thought, at any time, can pass
Into this all-sufficing mystery,
The soul's true home, then farewell all regret!
Be where we may, we are at home and peace.

XIV.

I cry for rest! e'en cast a weary eye
Within a quiet grave, if then my soul
Might find a heaven of meditative rest.
And O for one, the humblest though it were,
Of all the sanctuaries of still life
That lie secluded in this restless age,
Inherited perhaps by an Abuse!
But here I pant and whirl from place to place,
Bearing these wretched samples of my wares—
Goods! goods transform'd to evils in my thoughts—
Plague-spots, that fester in my very dreams!
Day after day, town after town—no end!
All days and places shuffled in a heap,
Each morn I need to search my jumbled brain
To find my *when* and *where*.

Yet, in this whirl,
I ever fall to momentary rest.
All peaceful things absorb me. In the stream
Of rushing cities I am often swirl'd
Into some grass-grown street; and, ere I know,
Shut from the buying, selling, cheating world.
Cathedrals with their quiet cloister'd yards,
Their soft-wing'd swallows and their ancient daws,
Do with me what they please—make me a monk.

And if to straggling suburbs business leads.
Some hedge-row, or a meadow's deeper green,
Takes me beyond all business: or a well,
Sun-lit within the sombre of a wood;
A daisy folding on a bank at eve;
A rain-drop on a thorn; a sleeping tree.—
O peaceful, thoughtful rest! thee and a crust!
But thus to be for ever on the bound,
My sacred aims, and hoarded, unread books,
Heart-breaks—which not to know at all were bliss—
Gardens of honey'd beds in which my soul,
With joy could work away its busy hours!

But I repine at Justice—with the Right
Make faithless argument. What have I done
To gain or to deserve the envied place?
My life has been a wandering, broken waste;
A constant shunning of the beaten roads;
And in this wilderness of no results
I fret for those reach'd by the beaten roads.

Of opportunity and thoughtful rest
I mourn the want, yet use not what I have:
My evenings squander'd with contented fools;
Long nights in sleep, or, for unneeded sleep,
Turning and moaning, and the morning light
Falling in vain on my sloth-blinded eyes.
O till that waste of time is all wrought up,
'Tis shame, and squander'd breath, to ask for more.
He ever drifts from opportunity

Who knows not to haul in the slack of time.
'Twere meanness to hold other than I have,
If this be my deserving. If the yoke
Unfit me, let me feel its galling just,
And in the pride of Right lose my complaint.
The world is full enough of well-placed men:
They serve old ends, but give it nothing new.
An unshaped man, put in their steads, would bring
New ways, new thoughts, to the exhausted spheres.
In my unfitting office I may find
What none else could, what nowhere else I can.
Why seek to do what is already done?
Or fill a place already snugly fill'd?
For ease—ignoble ease? O be thyself,
And let thy office shape to thee, or cease.

Come, then, my wretched budget, come my cross!
I'll kiss and bear thee on from town to town.
For thou art mine in being mine: by right
Or wrong, or fault, or weakness, thou art mine;
And, till that right's wrought out, that fault retrieved,
That weakness strengthen'd, or that wrong made right,
I may not lay thee down. Come then, my cross!

XV.

The half of man's allotted term I've lived
In glorious idleness—in work that gave,
With bread enough, rich hours of rosy eves,
Of morns with dewy eyes, of bright blue noons ;
And while my compeers moil'd as if their souls
Would leave them did they bate a single jot,
My foot would be afar upon the heath
With idle winds, or with the musing tide
Upon the lazy shore ; and all quaint nooks,
Green lanes, old woods, lone tarns, and forest pools,
Knew me at most untimely business hours.
Wherever I abode my heart took on
The image of the place ; it grew within
Like second nature, with a soft slow growth.

And then the sweet debauchery of books,
That led my soul into a trance of thought,
Without the rack of thinking !

Blessed time !
Of all that indolence and sloth could yield,
I drank my fill ; and though I often dream'd
The hand of stern necessity had snatch'd
My golden leisure, and made me a slave,

I had no faith in dreams, and still delay'd
The nobler use of leisure :—to reclaim
The wastes of mind ; to bring from the unknown
The trophy of a thought ; to give men's hearts
The thrill of some new beauty ; to restore
The ravel that impatient hurry breeds ;
To break down all oppression, and declare
The universal brotherhood of man ;
To seek God's mystery, to breathe new life
In dead beliefs, and bring to fretful hearts
The heaven of peace that rests alone in God.

Alas for precious leisure—precious now !
Now that my portion is the hour cut off
From needed sleep, the moment from a meal,
The blessed seventh day, for which thank Heaven,
Though friends in loving kindness take it all !—
Alas for leisure ! I have none ! The hours
Come howling round me, mad with work, till oft
I can but stand and look them all at bay :
But no—there's no abeyance—one by one,
Singly they must be taken, or I fall.

Moiling and toiling from the dawn to dusk—
Toiling and moiling in the blinding gas !
'Tis hard to work with only hands and brain,
Without the heart to help—the heart that longs
To bring its own loved work within its reach.

The hours, like noisy carriers, bring their loads

And heave them down before me, then are gone,
Uncaring for the care they leave behind.
The beat of brain within, the haste without,
The unceasing, surging roar along the streets,
The noisome vapours, and the stifled air,
With all the heartless seeking after gold—
O, memories of green and quiet fields,
But I am tired of this !—My only peace
Is not my own, but second-hand—it comes
In looking at repose :—the week-day church,
Within the rails so placid, while without
Is Babel ; or the massive pillar'd hall,
That puts to shame this littleness of haste,
And with its big thought slows the passing foot ;
Or Age—contented, almost vacant, age—
Sunning itself upon a garden walk,
Amid the hive of streets ; or even the glimpse
Of idle alehouse scenes—fat easy men
On benches, in a canopy of smoke,
And drawling out stale sentences, 'bout—nothing.

But why complain? I've had my share and more,
Though, like a foolish child, I've raked the sweets
Into the few first bites, and left the rest
Untempting, tasteless, to a stomach cloy'd.
Alas, had I but known ! the plain hard fare,
Without the sweets, had rear'd a stouter heart.

My life has fed on lonely idleness,
With varied wanderings by land and sea,

And now this daily treadmill-round of work,
This constant smother of my own idea,
And feeble working out of thoughts not mine,
Kills all the man within me.—O ! to be
Again let loose into the untamed life,
Free of restraint, and vagrant as the wind !

The wind itself—the free wind—moves in chains :
Within increasing circles freedom rules :
Necessity, God's mystery, bounds all.
Our highest freedom is to do the right,
As clearly and as stoutly as we may,
And wheresoe'er that leads us, still 'tis well.

Heaven knows that, with my present eyes, I see
Wrong turnings at all stages of my life :
But did I *then ?* Each seem'd my one best road.
Who knows but that it was ; that, while it led
To disappointment, the expected good
Was gain'd in Heaven's own way ? So in this slough
Through which I swelter, Heaven alone can tell
What buried treasures lie. The school-boy's task,
Which seem'd his penalty, becomes in time
His strength and blessing. In the world's great school
Our lessons are as little understood,
And even more abhorr'd. But ripening time
Brings fruit to all. What though the many die
Unblest by the fruition ! If we pass
Like sunrise onward in eternal day,
A time will come for all ; and who may know

What tasks and trials now do best prepare
Each for his unknown sphere? The dead dry rules
Of language, that seem'd worthless to the youth,
Are to the man the wings of living thought.
And so the work of life, that seems mean toil,
Transform'd, will soar hereafter.

And so ends
My sorrow in philosophy. But shall
My hope of high achievement also end—
My lifelong hankering after work in which
Head, heart, and hand might join—and I tame down
Into an unaspiring useful tool?
Is fine ambition vain, save when the act
Goes with it? And unwrought deeds, seen afar
In the despairing night, are they false stars?
If so, where be our guides, since life's dense fog
Lies all before us, our next step unknown?
O, trust thy best ideal, cherish still
The glory that the young heart burn'd to reach:
It was not there for nothing: work and wait.

Though hard necessity of daily bread
Drive in another path, and fate and chance
And weakness all combine to cramp the hope,
Still, *think* towards the achievement. Living thought,
Like Nature, works all things unto its ends,
And uses up what cannot be opposed.
None ever reach'd his heart's goal in the way
Himself plann'd or desired, but in God's way;

And when 'twas reach'd, he saw the hindrances
Were steps whereby the ascent was overcome.
In lives and rivers, the impediments
Give each a voice peculiarly its own.
Be mine the brave endurance of a stream,
By countless barriers turn'd off from my course ;
Yet, after toilsome windings, still come round
Upon my loved intent—my seaward way.

XVI.

Each morning as I thread my accustom'd way,
This heaven of beauty in her face I meet—
Soft Grecian lines that put Art to despair,
And eyes that gave the thankless stones their light,
Which is to me a heavenly secret still.—
She comes to worship at the Roman shrine;
'Tis all I know; for I am nought to her!
And what is she to me? More than I know.

O not the sweet exchange of love for love!
For I have wealth of that, and crave no more.
I seek not to awake one slumbering pulse
In that rapt being, raise one lash to steal
The fringèd mystery beneath those lids:
An unapproach'd divinity be she,
Now and for ever, name and home, all, all
Within the mystic circle. But the joy
Of passing in her beauty—that is mine.
To me she is the bright bow 'mid the storm,
The star that crosses the blue gulfs in clouds,
The bud awaking from its winter dream,
Or aught of sweet ineffable surprise
That leaves the gazer touch'd with light from Heaven.—
For we should know all beauty is of God—
The underlying presence gleaming through

The outward forms. We may not understand,
By any lesser theory, how this
Fine ecstasy of beauty finds the soul.
The minster bell's deep boom strikes on my ear:
It strikes a deeper note amid my thoughts.
Can mere vibrations of surrounding air,
Outbeaten from the steeple's brazen lips,
Breaking on cartilage and nerve—can these,
Material as they are, or seem to be,
Mingle with spirit, and grow thought? Ah, no!
They are the scabbards for the gleaming steel
That so mysteriously cuts to the quick.—
And when the organ's myriad lips create,
Of air, the warbling miracle which finds
Strange concord in the soul, O is it air
That pierces to extremities of sense,
And works this wonder on the guest within?
Ah—call me not irreverent—'tis God,
The mystery of harmony and air!—
So, when our gazing wonder is absorb'd
Within the bosom of a simple flower,
Is it the delicately-blended hues
And the delicious odour that enchant?
Ay, these. But what are these? O think, and think!
The very God of Heaven is in the flower.

We cannot get beyond the fact of beauty:
It is to be adored, not analysed:
We seek to analyse, and it recedes
Into the deeper beauty. For in truth

The merest thing in Nature is a spirit :
All outward forms of beauty take their form
And beauty from the inward. Can it be
That when the outward forms have gone to dust,
The inward are within the world of spirits ?
No empty world is that, but full as this
With all that we deem excellent.—And so,
'Tis heaven to me to meet this beauteous face—
The angel in the woman—Heaven indeed,
To think that earthly beauty may not die,
But deepen to the Heavenly—to feel
That we may give, without the fear of loss,
Unstinted heart to everything we love.—
Our loves are only half lived : there is still
Some timid apprehension of an end
That reins the heart, and breaks its full free bound.

O glorious earth ! how much there is in thee
To love and worship ! How much more would come
Could we dispel all petty fears and take,
With trustful hearts, the fulness of each day,
Believing that the soul, divinely fill'd
With love, can never lose the things it loves !
For seeming loss is still a deeper gain ;
The object passes more into the mind,
And mind alone possesses. When death comes,
It lets us more and more back to the things
Which now we mourn as lost.—Ah, I have left
The dim mysterious woods, the brooding hills,
The daisied meadows and the haunted streams,

To rack my brains for bread, miles deep in streets.
Yet oft amidst my toil, far through my soul,
The woods, the hills, the meadows, and the streams
Come robed in brighter glory than of yore;
In sleep, the prototype of death, they come
With an intenser beauty—or I go
In rapture back to them: and so when death
Gives free emancipation, I shall soon—
Ay, very soon—be where I long to be.

O nothing can be lost; and we can make
All things our own by loving them. What need
Of fearing or repining? Even I
Might be a very lord of Earth and Time.—
Away, all cant about *position, wealth!*
A thought dissolves it. Greatly live, each, all;
For God's true wealth is free to each and all—
The wealth of thought, the heritage of love.

XVII.

When in the blaze of life I see old mates
Rich, in command, and courted; while, with years
Fast undermining, I obscurely serve,
I hardly can suppress the envious whine.
Yet, could I ope the ledgers of each heart,
As I can do my own, and cast all up,
Who knows which side the balance might be on?

Debtor and creditor, how stands my account?
A drudging clerk—most helpless trade!—condemn'd,
For bread, to give my all, my golden hours,
From morn, up through the day into the night,
Unearthing old accounts in ill-kept books,
Brain-rack'd with *balances*, sear'd with *per cents*,
Buried in *bills, cash, interest* and *goods:*
Perhaps for one who, if he could, would turn
The whole earth with its beauty into *cash*,
All mankind but himself, their loves and hopes,
Fine aspirations, deep inventions—all,
Would *realize* in cash, and grasp the whole;
Who grudges breathing-time, feeds on the toil
Of servants, brain and body, gloats as if
Each drop of sweat came out a golden coin,
And all for him; whose avaricious soul
Knows not the taste of peace, but quakes in fear

Of bankruptcies, embezzlements, and ruin;
Who chuckles oft, and grins, but cannot laugh,
For very want of room about his heart.

The dread of being slave to such a slave!
So runs my account. On the same side I find
Items against me of a smaller mark,
But great in count—perhaps the roots of all:—
Procrastination with its crust of sloth—
Faith in to-morrow, indolent to-day;—
The amiable propensity that sees
An equal good in opposites, and hence
Indifference, indecision, and the trains
Of lifelong rues that follow,—for success
Oft comes from blindness to the opposing right.—
One item more,—'tis *sundries*—useful term!
Embracing petty failings and defects,
Unknown to me, but yet by others seen,
And swelling the result, who knows how much?

So much for that side. On the other stand—
A mind that hates all bondage, and owns none,
But, 'mid life's hard necessities, lives free
From all that slaves the thought;— an open love
For all the forms of being, finding good
In tavern and temple, sinner and saint;
Deep joy within the courts of Heaven; light joy—
If sadness too—along the flaunting streets;—
An appetite for Beauty, that devours
Nature's and Art's rich feasts, and yet can live

Upon their simplest meals—the dusty ray
That briefly slants at noon across my desk,
Like God's enchanting wand, a touch from Heaven—
The happy smoke, from sooty dens let free
To sail away into the sea of light—
The myriad reflex of the painter's dreams
Shop windows freely give—and wandering notes
Of street musician, be they e'er so rude;—
A sweet immunity from avarice,
Which reckons that, at least, if nothing's gain'd,
No thought, no toil is lost in the attempt;—
The economy that never can be poor,
But richer grows by lessening its wants;—
Rare health, impervious to the damps of life,
Social and physical—from battering storms
Shaking my feathers for another flight;—
A deepening belief in Right and Truth,
That they are not *our* thought, but from above—
The moral gravity that sways events
To highest good, however bad they seem;—
The love of books, which finds in them the gold
That buys up all conditions;—above all,
A share in that fine alchymy whose touch
Reveals the God in all things, gives the peace
That passeth understanding.—These I note
Of personal inheritance. Then comes
This item *out* of self; a happy home—
A small, poor home, but O how rich to me!
Enrich'd by one who sheds around the hearth
Perpetual summer, flowering into love;

And little busy hearts that round her swarm,
Half hid in folds, like bees in smothering blooms;
An Eden to my soul, and when at morn
I leave, I straight begin to long for even.

So, now, I've cast up both sides. If to you
The balance seems against me, O believe
With me it is far otherwise! For each
Appraises his effects by his own gauge.
If Shakespeare is my gold, Australia's mines
Would fail to make me rich. All things are poor
To him that may not bathe them deep in love;
And of the things I love, great store have I.

My envious cloud soon passes: 'tis the rack
That scuds on sunny wings in summer skies,
Interpreting how deep the blue beyond!

XVIII.

Farewell, my Channing! I will call thee mine,
For love gives full possession. Two rich years,
Obscurely and unknown to thee, I've lived
Upon thy wealth of thought; and through each week
Have hunger'd, hunger'd for thy Sabbath feast.—
But thou art gone, as if the hand of death
Had on the instant beckon'd thee away.—
E'en through that sermon which became our last,
A hope possess'd me almost to the end;
But when the closing word fell from thy lips,
Methought the door of Heaven slamm'd in my face,
And left me outside weeping, thou within.—
That beauteous temple of thy ministry,
Its heavenward pillars and its pictured light,
Breathed inwardly the very soul of Art.
It was a living beauty—it is now
Only a splendid tomb, fill'd with regret.

And who of all thy creed—if creed be thine,
Whose universal heart has room for all—
Shall fitly fill thy place? Many will come;
And flowing essays, brimm'd with noble thoughts,
And very like to sermons, we shall have;
But who shall be the preacher? They will come;
And when they've pass'd the ordeal we shall find

New laurel round thy name, and in our hearts
A deeper pang of grief. And adverse minds
That held thee as a dreamer, misty, vague,
Will, from the mere transparency that follows,
Grow doubly clear, and learn to read thy dreams.

However low our scale of mind, we think
That all beyond our easy reach is dream;
And he best pleases our conceit who says
Just what we know, or plainly comprehend.
Thus do we keep the comfortable plain.
But would we catch the beams that wake the soul
To new and wondrous life, choose him that takes
The panting heights; and though in cloud and mist
We lose him oft, yet, ever and anon,
The gleams break through, the misty curtain lifts,
And we behold our leader and his thought,
Standing all brightness on a sun-brow'd hill.

Ah, such wert thou! Thy theme, however low,
Soon beat the Heavenly chords: for God, the sum
Of all true preaching, was thy all in all.
If thou didst ever harp upon that chord,
'Twas glorious sameness, and, like blessed bread,
Came with a daily sweetness. Thou wouldst stand
Possess'd in thought, thy utterance half choked;
And we could almost fear thy burden'd thought
Was not for us, when lo! it came, like some
Rock-barrier'd spring, in unexpected ways.
No measured strain, of which, the first part given,

And we might end the sentence : it was more
An inspiration through thee, thou thyself
As much surprised as we. For thou wert still
The worshipper, and not alone the priest.

The thought unlived in giving it, falls dead—
It matters not how true it be. But thine
Came ever molten, burn'd with life, and fill'd
The heart in unknown depths.—And thine the aim
To knit up fritter'd lives, and give to each
The quickening truth that God has work for him ;
That to the unknown meaning of the world
His life gives new solution ; that within
The crucible of being he may drop
Some needed chemical. Ah, then, how great
The need of being faithful to his star,
That lode which draws his genius to fulfil
God's end in him, and reap the inward bliss
Which faithfulness matures through weal or woe.

Thine was no terror-God in far-off heaven,
But closely here, and, in the strictest sense,
Father and nourisher of living souls :
From whom in daily breakings-through of Truth,
And change of Beauty, we draw endless life.
For whatsoever thing wakes love in us—
E'en to the lowest appetite—does so
Because of God therein ; and love is life.
Love most, live most ; and he that highliest loves,
The highliest lives. We deem it strange that God,

Whom outward eye has never yet beheld,
Can be the object of our fullest love:
But who has ever seen the thing belov'd?
'Tis inward all; and when it passes forth
The visible's unlovable,—as earth
Would be unlovely dross did God withdraw.—
Things rise to truth and beauty in so far
As God lives freely through them. See that flower,
Whose natural conditions give no check
To the Divine inflowing, and what soul
Can get beyond its beauty? When I drink
The wonder from its cup, my brain is turn'd
To sweet stupidity. If simple plants
Live, and are beautified by God in them,
So, surely, man. He lives from God to God,
A constant inspiration; and the sole
Condition of his growth is evermore
Obedience to the inward voice of Right.

We pray for health and peace and all good things.
But if I rightly understood thy prayers,
They were for more of God and more of God—
The one true light that pales the rest, and gives
That perfect day our cravings blindly seek.—
God comes to us in every faithful act,
In every glimpse of beauty, in all Truth,—
But most immediately in lonely prayer.
True prayer, even while it asks, receives—
If not what most we seek, what most we need.
'Tis not so much a cause as a result;

And God is with us ere the lip be moved.
That we can pray is answer to our prayer.
To raise amidst our thoughts a little crypt,
Sacred to God, and through this porch of prayer,
Daily to enter, for the briefest term,
And leave outside our follies, strifes and sins,
Were sweet redemption and a growing Heaven
For us, who cannôt, without ceasing, pray.

Thy every Sabbath gave us some new heart,—
The after week was upward. Thou art gone!
And in the stand-still of my grief I feel
The ground already slipping. On the heights
To keep our footing, is to climb and climb.
We cease to climb, the shingly slopes give way,
And we are passing downward.—Thou art gone!
And in our clouded ken, there's no one left
To tell us of the light beyond the clouds.—
Farewell! Could we not bravely lose thee now,
It would belie thy teachings: this our faith—
That God's true servants serve most by their loss
The Christ that preach'd the Sermon on the Mount,
Began His ministry upon the Cross.

XIX.

For one whole week I breathed Orcadian air—
So far up in the north that, all the time,
I felt among cloud-islands of the skies.
And Autumn lay asleep among the isles;
The fiords all had still'd their roaring throats,
Afraid to wake her, and, into themselves,
Murmur'd a drowsy bass; the grim-brow'd cliffs
Bent forward, half relax'd their savage looks
At seeing them reflected in the pools.—
As oft I stood upon a tiptoe hill,
The lesser islands sailed out in the bays,
And promontories drifted into isles.
It was enchanted land—some other world—
That hung within the void; and rounding all,
Beneath it as above, was calm blue sky.

High over all, the weather-beaten head
Of Hoy rises. On his scarrèd brow
He wears a precious stone—a carbuncle—
Enough, 'tis thought, to buy Orcadia.
From certain points its fiery beams are seen;
And many an islander has mark'd the spot,
Then clomb the footless heights to snatch the prize,
And be for ever rich. In vain his search!
The bright delusion's never to be found.

But when he has retraced the perilous steep,
The thing he sought is in its place again,
And laughs at him. So are we ever fool'd
On earth by things that glitter. Wealth and fame
When reach'd are never found. But, failing oft,
We learn at last our truest wealth is *love*,—
Best fame, *approving conscience.*

Up the cliffs
Of Hoy, there's another precious stone,
Suggesting richer wealth than diamond,
Ruby, or pearl—yea, all the ruck of gems.
The breezy front of that high beetled rock
Presents, as if medallion'd on the sky,
By Nature chisel'd, the exact profile
Of *Walter Scott.* There has the wizard brow
Hung brooding o'er the isles from time unknown,
And seen enacted all the stirring lore
Of pirates, smugglers, jarls and old sea-kings.
O storied Prince ! from that high stand, on this,
Its northern bound, look southward and behold
Thy legendary empire.

In the north
Both Nature and Antiquity had freaks
Of writing thoughts in stone. In yonder holm,
All solitary, far from human strife,
Some desert soul has hewn itself a house
Out of the solid rock. Tradition gives
No record but its name—*The Dwarfie Stone.*

Yet oft a history is in a name :
And we in this may read the gnarl'd dwarf,
Unhuman held, uncanny, to be fear'd,—
Retiring to the desert from the gaze
Of superstitious, half averted eyes,
Knowing no kindred but his own weird thoughts,
The trailing clouds, the shrieking winds, the sprite
That whistles 'mong the rocks before a storm ;
Perhaps the visitings of troubled ghosts,
Or deeper stir of the eternal God ;—
And, driven thus within himself, becoming
Wrapp'd with the visions of the inner world,
That make him fear'd the more ; unearthly light
Gathering within his eyes, and lonely thought
Ensphering him in visionary mist ;
Till, like a thing in fairy waters dipt,
He takes mysterious change, and comes to be
The weird but innocent tyrant of the isles.

And in Orcadia we find the rocks
That Miller read—the very rocks that gave
To him their " testimony," in a type
Already ancient when our Adam came,
To which his Eden's but a minute since,
The fabled flood the rain that fell e'en now :
Those marvellous stone scriptures that reveal
What monsters trod the earth and swam the seas,
Or crawl'd in slime of half-created earth,
Age after age, ere yet the eye of man
Was there to watch ; and how the aged woods,

Year after year, put on their roofs of green,
And waited eras with their oaken aisles,
Without one Druid soul to dedicate
Their silences to prayer: whose only sounds
Were of the winds and rains, the beasts that made
Fierce loves and fiercer wars, heaven's fiery bolts
That rent the groaning oaks, the old-world screams
Of birds to us unknown; but surely not
The linkèd music of our modern woods;
For in my heart I read that merle and thrush,
Yea, all the voices of our woodland quires,
Were given to Eve in paradise, long, long
After the writing of those books of stone.

Inland the explorer turns—if inland be,
Where all is island, even the island's cleft
With reaches of the sea—and he beholds
Stennis, the mystic Stonehenge of the north,
Upon a tongue of springy sward that parts
Two bleak, half-salted lochs. A stranger, he
Knows not what sight awaits him, passing down
The easy sloping road, when starts in view
A curve of visionary things, that shine
Like ghosts amid the sunlight, white or gray,
As pass the sailing shadows of the clouds.
With wondering gaze and speculative thought,
He nears and nears them, while by slow removes
They've rank'd themselves into a giant ring
Of hoary stones, and, in the centre, one
Of huger bulk than any of the rest.

Speak! ye dumb priests of eld, and say what kind
Of men they were that set you thus on end,
And to what purpose? Not a single word!
The yellowhammer sits on your bald crowns,
And mocks my queries with its moorland pipe:
Methinks a whisper runs from each to each,
But 'tis the wind upon your flinty sides,
And not your inward voices. Ye have slept
The dream of many ages, and your own
Is harden'd into stone. It will not yield
To us the reflex of its inner self,
Long cross'd Time's dusky gulf, though living still
In some far circle of eternal light.
Yet underneath the springy sward, and through
The solid hearts of these old stones, I feel
The beating thought that raised them; and within
This almost mythic temple I am bow'd
With worship deeper than mere stones evoke.
A haunted place—the ancient forms of men,
And their devotion gone, all long, long gone!
But these gray stones that heard their songs and pray'rs,
Ring with their spirits yet; this grass has lived
Perennially since then—the same they trod:
Yon sun, so old and young, look'd down on them,
And saw their rites: he looks the same on me.
O, Druid! we are one; I feel thy thoughts
Now climbing up to God. The *form* of thought
Goes with the age—the *thought* is for all time.

In sight of *Stennis* there's another waif

Of the forgotten times. On the dark heath
There is a circular mound—as many such,
In outside look, among those isles there be:
But most are only heap'd-up earth and stones,
O'ergrown with Nature's coverlet of green.
In *this* one, when the antiquarian spade,
Only the other day, upturn'd the sod,
Some blocks of unlimed masonry appear'd.
Then pick and labouring crowbar came to work,
And pick'd and prized, when lo! this ponderous roof—
For such 'twas found to be—fell, groaning, in,
And darkness, the freed prisoner, leapt out.
All eyes were in amaze, and, looking down,
Beheld a chamber, square, and all compact,
Its firm walls built of uncemented flags,
Knit flat upon each other. On three sides,
Recesses, breast high, open'd into cells
About the size of beds, paved, roof'd and wall'd
With single flags. A passage on the fourth,
Some twenty feet in length, each side one block,
Led outward from the chamber; would have led
Into the open day, but for the earth
That choked its outer entrance, and the sod
That green'd the whole into a grassy mound.

And what its history? Who knows? who knows?
No implement of peace or war was found,
No relic of the living or the dead.—
Yet may itself tell all. Upon the slabs
That pillar the four corners, and around

The lintels of the cells, are many lines
Of Runic writ, but all so out of date
That none in all the north can read one word :
They wait the coming Daniel. At one place—
And strangely out of place among the Runes—
Was found a dragon artfully engraved ;
The doing, clearly, of some after age ;
And 'twas inferr'd from this, that once before
The place had been discover'd, and this now
Only a re-discovery.—Nothing more
Is to be known until the dragon speak,
And older Runes reveal. But only think
With what sweet faith the gravers cut their thoughts
Into the during stone—that, while it lasts,
Their names and day might live ! These unearth'd walls
Shut from the washing rains and beating winds,
Are fresh as when first quarried from the earth ;
But who shall wake a living soul within
Their mummied characters, and make them tell—
E'en tell how long their histories are dead !

The quaint Orcadian towns—Kirkwall, Stromness !—
Their streets about as wide as one might span
With good long arms outstretch'd—like closes paved—
And crooked as the inside of a whelk—
Gables and angles jutting to the front—
And while in other towns, stables and sheds
Are in the rear of houses, these have piers,
Where, in the olden time, each house kept moor'd
Its own sea steed, and in the later days

The skipper snugg'd his schooner and enjoy'd
His winter ease : secluded havens and safe—
Suggesting rolls of silk, and pipes of wine,
And tales of starlight smuggling.—In our age
Of lighted towns, how fine to realize
The antique dream of darkness in the streets ;
Stromness is yet in innocence of gas—
In subterranean gloom, with, here and there
A lamp that fights to keep its oily soul
Amid the drowning dark ; and when we grope
Our doubting way about the winding streets,
Meetings, not unromantic, oft take place.

But Kirkwall, the metropolis of the isles,
Shines with the modern flame ; which throws its glare
Against the ancient palaces of earls,
And halls of old sea-kings. For here we find
The strong palatial gateways, the paved courts
And thick-wall'd mansions of the lordly times,
Degraded into hostelries and shops.
And here Saint Magnus lifts his sacred pile
In bold cathedral beauty, seen afar
By islanders at labour in their fields,
Or drawing the sea's produce from the fiords,
And by the straining eyes that pass in ships.
For though all earth, with its Mosaic floor
Of heath and rock, green plain, and shore, and sea,
And yon far ceiling of the dreamy blue,
Should be our God-built temple, yet we think
We reach some inner worship in those shrines

That men have built to God ; and thus, far seen,
They work a Sabbath in the gazer's heart.

Saint Magnus, though I may refuse thy creed,
These massive, grim, red, weather-beaten walls,
Their dim old epitaphs, with sea devices,
And even thy two brass platters that receive
The weekly pence—large, round, and rude, like shields
Of sea-gods, with quaint mottoes round their rims,
In stout old English of a northern ring,—
Saint Magnus, these, with Christ's dear life that breathes
Through every stone, and consecrateth all,
Put out the creeds, and leave thee a pure shrine,
Wherein the universal heart might kneel—
Yea, all that know the everlasting God.

Within an ancient hostelry I lay ;
The revellers of night had dropt to rest ;
And Dawn's gray eye was opening, when I heard
A gathering of noises in the streets :
The bleat of sheep, the short sharp bark of dogs,
The nickering of ponies, the mix'd rowte
Of bullocks, some like groans, and some as shrill
Almost as trumpets, and the shouts of men—
Drovers that whoop'd and whistled through their teeth.
And when I rose the bay was molten gold ;
The steamer and her shadow, keel to keel,
Lay dreamily at anchor : her thick smoke
Curl'd up in one straight column and dissolved
Into the viewless air : her decks were pack'd

With all those noisy breakers of my sleep,
Now quietly resign'd : boats, gunwale deep
With passengers and luggage from the shore,
Pass'd others lightly coming for their loads.
Before the sun had reach'd halfway to noon
We had embark'd. The steamer's jarring bell
Clash'd out its last alarum to the shore,
Amid the roar of the impatient steam.
But soon that labouring giant found its work
Among the ponderous cranks, and he was still'd.
We steer'd to sea, clove through the gleaming calm,
Pass'd little isles and weather-eaten rocks
On either side, still keeping out to sea ;
And soon Orcadia pass'd into the clouds.

XX.

As through the world's great show of Sixty-two
I wander'd, gazed and marvell'd, in my soul
A solemn humiliation most prevail'd.
In all that concentration of man's art,
I had no hand; none ask'd me, Would I help?
That beauty, ingenuity and skill—
The outcome of the world's far forward day—
Were none of mine. The savage, with his tools
Of shell and flint, contributed his craft,
And help'd the world to move: the beasts that range
The pathless desert gave as much as I.
My only claim was, that I went to see.
And that was something. He that, looking on,
Says in his heart, Well done! makes smoother way
For all that is to follow, and thus aids
The onward move unconsciously. But he
Who is himself no doer, and who looks
Not to admire, but only to pick flaws—
Though perfect even as his own conceit—
What is he but a drag upon the age?—
So if I did not add one thing of use
Or beauty, I could freely give my heart,
With all its plaudits. If in my own vein
I also could work out a thought or two,
And lay them on the altar of our day,

Then might I through my offering find peace.—
For what had all those things once been but thoughts,
Embodied now in forms? the whole a thought
Of Albert, the good prince, who was indeed
A king—unknown as such till he was lost.

In those bright summer days of Sixty-two,
All hearts, all trains, all boats seem'd making up
For London; and, when there, 'buses and cabs,
And keen pedestrians, through every street,
All crowded to one centre with one aim,
Which seem'd to make broadcloth and fustian one,
And nations all one brotherhood. For there,
Britons and Franks, the Russian and the Turk,
Forgot their wars; the three-times-injured Pole
Almost, if not forgot, forgave his wrongs.
There came the ancient Dane, the blue-eyed Swede,
And Norway's hardy sons; the brave Magyar;
The German, drowsy with deep thought and smoke;
The mountain Swiss, whom tyrants could not bow;
The Greek of great descent—alas, how great!
Italia's sons, all music; and the Don,
Proud of Castilian blood. And from the East,
The old, old East, Caliphs and Viziers came,
In whose loose sumptuous garments we re-read
All the Arabian tales. E'en China sent
A few celestial eyes to be enlarged
In the barbarian's show. From isles unknown,
And countries far, far inland, came strange men
Of every hue. And even the embattled States,

Unmatch'd for ingenuity, could spare
From deadly strife, their sons—alas, too few!

And so, we came, and met, and fraternized—
All brothers from all countries of the earth—
And merged all tongues in one; for vocal speech
Gave over to the universal eye
Its office, and we spake the world-wide tongue.

Beneath that glass-domed roof we never thought
About this outer world, its cares and toils,
But wander'd in a bright enchanted land—
A dream, a fairy world, a very heaven,
Where all that heart could wish for, straight appear'd.—
We enter'd, and the falling waters brought
Anthems of mossy dingles in our ears;
And on their scented breath our spirits pass'd
Into forgetful sweetness. But anon,
The deep-lung'd organ rolled its music clouds
Far through the mazy aisles; or clarion lips
Blew martial strains that stirr'd the creeping blood,
Until the oaten warble of the flutes
Brought back its dreamy pace.

Through endless courts,
Interminable galleries and aisles,
We wander'd, each one by his genius drawn
To linger longest where its charm was most.
Some hung in rapture o'er a glittering stone,
No bigger than a walnut, but in price

Almost a fable ; or a trophy, framed
Of gold and studded gems, in value rank'd
Beyond all common count. What *are* those gems ?
The histories of the rocks we greatly know,
And rest much satisfied : but can we guess
The fine creative secrets that have made
The diamond, the emerald, the sapphire ?
Creations rare as genius among men,
And therefore to be gazed at.

Some pass'd by
The jewell'd wonders with a slighting glance,
And sought the industrial courts ; there to behold
The myriad skill'd machinery at work.
The clicking looms wove out their pictured hues
Like dawn, as if behind their flickering skeins
A guiding spirit moved ; and queer machines,
Fed with some raw material, did work
That only heads and hands, we thought, could do.
Models of engines, too, in brass and steel,
Supplied with tiny arteries of steam,
Work'd noiselessly as thought.—Ah ! there it was—
Within those busy courts—my wasted life
The most upbraided me. Those things had come
Out of the brains of men since I was born,
And made a new world, while I drowsed and dream'd.

Then, in the agricultural domains,
What troops of swarthy farmers, landed squires,
And buxom, rosy matrons ! They would stand

In knots around some new-invented churn,
Or patent cheese-press, or the plough that turns
Four furrows at a time; and thus, with heads
Lean'd wisely to one side, discuss their points—
How that the new surpass'd, by far, the old,
Or how that, after all, say what you will,
The good old implement was still the thing!

Among the minerals and chemicals
There was not much to catch the thoughtless eye;
But let the *mind* once look at them, and soon
The day was gone in wonder. There we saw,
Before us laid, the vitals of the earth;
The ores, so little use ere yet man's thought
Was breathed into them—with the living brain
To fuse, refine, and fashion them, the wealth
Of nations and their warlike arbiters;—
And all the essences that chemistry
Has found for us in most unlikely things—
Rank poisons even in our wholesome food,
And in most noxious refuse sweetest balms;—
Compacts of Nature loosen'd and reduced
To single elements, their secrets bared,
All save the one great secret that combined
The sever'd parts: it pass'd unseen beneath
The chemist's eye, pass'd like a soul at death.
This was the elixir that, in old times,
The men accounted wizards tried to find
By crucible and fire. It is the same
That gives the poesie to poet's lines,

But passes, likewise, if they are analyzed :
The same that mystics in their visions see,
But, bringing other eyes to be enrich'd,
Can show them nothing : for of old 'twas written,
That never man by search might find it out.

But on, on through the gorgeous wilderness—
For we are busy people when at home,
And here our time is short. From court to court
We visited the nations of the earth.
With all their waving flags and countless products ;
Our hovering eyes, like bees in plots of flowers,
Afraid to light, lest in some special bloom
We lose the winged day. On through the courts,
And dipping out into the dazzling aisles,
And passing carelessly a world of things,
The poorest one of which were in our eyes
A household god, if in our little homes.—
But there were some creations there, that stood
In rings of gazing eyes all through the days,—
As that death-struggle of two Danes in bronze,
With quaint home-legends round its pedestal
In sorrowing *bas-reliefs :* it was, in sooth,
A long day's study, and it went far back
Among the deep affections of the heart.
Or that all-beauteous form, that marble dream,
Our Gibson's tinted Venus, whose blue eyes
And breathing limbs made all pale sculpture dead,
To him who once on that sweet vision gazed.—
But wherefore name, where everything deserved

A special note? 'Twere best to leave them all
Without report,—as when, in Shakspeare's page,
I first began to *mark* the golden lines,
But gave it up on finding every line,
If not all gold, at least so deftly turn'd,
That it became a part of England's tongue,
For aye to be remember'd.

But aloft,
To winding galleries the dense crowds press.
Some linger o'er the products of the looms—
The snow-white linens, and the gorgeous silks,
And cottons, many-hued; but most pass on
To the great halls, wherein the limner's art
Had clad the walls with pictured histories,
And legends, allegories, famous dreams,
Of tragedy and farce. And there, to stand
Before the very work that Hogarth did,
And Wilkie, Etty, Landseer, and Maclise!
The master-works wherewith, at second-hand,
The graver's skill has dower'd all our homes.
But here again, to name, I feel the old
Shakspearian futility, and leave,
Without the risk of dragging one great work
Into obscurer light, out of its heaven
Of silent admiration, speechless gaze.

And now, though shut in from the outer world,
We see the day has sloped far down the west.
The twilight shadows creep along the walls,

And we have scarcely yet begun to see
The world's great show. So let us now begin.—
Alas! the deep bell swings, and clang on clang
Rolls far and wide along the vaulted aisles.
The vast concave is all one volumed clang;
The startled multitudes fall into streams
And ripple off; and we that still remain,
To snatch a lingering look, are netted out
By guardians of the peace in narrowing lines.

Thus leave we the great domes and vaulted roofs
All night unto the watcher's measured tramp,
And creeping shadows from the moon and stars,
And spirits of their daily visitants,
Revisiting in what are call'd their dreams;
Until the morning rises and repeats
Our yesterday. And so at last we leave,
With no complete conception, but souls fill'd
With one grand wonder, which gives all our days
An under-stream of grandeur to the end.

XXI.

The poetry of earth is learnt in youth,
Through every open pore. When years have baked
Hard crust about the soul, the beauty-throbs
Of Nature cannot reach it. I am stirr'd
More with the memory, the dream of things,
Than with the present fact. The setting day
Set through me one time, and the morning light
Came inwardly, and gave me richer blood.
But now they pass outside, and scarcely move
A pulse in all my being. I go far
To pay my homage to some world-famed lake,
Or mountain that puts on its crown of gold
An hour before the dawn ;—but when I seek
To live the admiration, it grows dim.
The village pond and sunny bank, I find,
Have been more potent in their day, and yet
I turn'd no foot to see them.

But we know
The spiritual breathings never come
To conscious expectation. Ghosts appear,—
But not when watch'd for. And the mystic light,
That steals, unsought, into the poet's eye,
And gives him Nature's imagery, comes not
When gazers call. Stars drop their lustry dew

Into the very eye of glaring Day,
Yet Day sees none. The things we seek, we miss:
But something else we do not seek, we get.
So, when I journey'd far to view the lake,
Or clomb laboriously the sun-crown'd hill,
And got not what I went for, who shall say
I got not something even more divine?—
Believe, that every wind blows some new seed
Within the fallow patches of the heart.
We see its flower, but whence or when it comes,
We never know. Though we are grown-up men
To that which we have learnt, we still are babes
To all that is beyond, and fed like babes.
We cry for more, still more—our wiser nurse
Knows that we have enough, and places us
Where needs, not wishes, may be best supplied.

A piece of business takes me to converse
With some much-favour'd man. His fields and herds,
His gardens, and his far-outlooking house,
Raise painful questionings. They are to him
Only as so much money. Were they mine,
How much more fully could I draw their wealth!
'Tis folly! Let him keep them—he that needs
The riches he unconsciously receives,
And they so largely give. I have enough
Of the divinity of woods and glebes;
But many empty corners in my brain
Which Nature cannot fill. I must go back
To duties that for me hold out no charm.

That which we *would* be, we already are,
And do not need to be it. The desire
Arises from the fitness; and if earth
Were other than a school, 'twere well to do
The thing that each is fittest for. But no—
The world can do with failure and bad work,
So long as better'd men grow out of them.

The best philosophy still brings us back
To cheerful, child-like trust, our highest truths,
And most immediate duties. These accept—
These live and do, and so be one with God—
A willing part of that great wave that moves
The eras onward to the unknown shore:
Or, if a shoreless wave, still good for all.

XXII.

A summer week was closing in the dusk,
When, after many years, full of events,
I enter'd once again my mother-town.—
The ancient steeple boom'd, and shook the streets
With old-remember'd clangour, and the spires
Struck out the hours and quarters in known tongues.
But in the crowded streets I was unknown,
And wander'd like a ghost that sees, unseen.
Companions of my youth came past. How old,
And burden'd with the world they seem'd! Ah me!
Can I, who feel so young, look old to them?
And some I knew as poor and dull of brain,
Seem'd now the portly leaders of the town!
Whilst others, born of leaders, seem'd their slaves,
And pass'd with skulking cringe. The Provost's son,
Who carried off the prizes in our class,
Now wheel'd a brewer's barrow, and the lad
That swept the school was Provost. Gray old men,
An age before my time, came shuffling past;
But through their wrinkles I could recognize
The features of their prime. Through lighted panes
I look'd into the shops, and heads inside,
That I had known as rattle-brains, were now
Moider'd with money, with accounts perplex'd.
And some were eaten to the bones with care,

While others laugh'd and fatten'd. I mistook
The joyous maiden of my earliest youth—
Now sadly overlarded—for her mother.
And by her stood herself, her very self—
Not one whit changed in twenty changeful years—
Who lifted up her sweet blue eyes, and mine
Fell lost within them; yet she turned away,
Unconsciously, and look'd elsewhere. Alas!
It was the daughter of my sweet Blue-eyes!

But in my wand'rings, ere the darkness fell,
I turn'd me down an old and grimy close,
And stood before the house where first I breathed;
Now tenantless and haunted, all its panes
Stoned in, its casements broken, and its doors
Seal'd up with rust and mould; its sooty sides
Streak'd and begrimed with rivulets of rain;
Shut off from noise, yet in the midst of noise;
But all so quiet, I could hear the rats,
'Mid rattling plaster, squeaking in the walls.
And then, the dank thick smell! 'twould kill me now;
Yet I remember well, it was the same
'Mid which, in those unsanitary days,
I lived and throve. And wonderfully well
We live in any vile-condition'd place,
So long as ignorance conceals the risk:
But once our fears are chemically waked,
We sicken where we throve. And so in morals:—
Friend, you may practise all your tricks of trade,
And yet escape damnation: but for me,

I do them at my peril. The false act
Soon withers with my victim; but its roots
Are here, and grow up nettles in my breast.

The old town went to bed in drenching rain.
All night we heard the plashing in the streets,
The choking conduits, and the bocking spouts.
But, drenching as it was, the summer night
Drank up the floods, and Sabbath morning found
A sweet baptismal beauty over all.

The kirk-bells rang the quiet Sabbath in—
Along the drowsy streets, up to the hills,
And down the sleeping river out to sea.
A solemn hush fill'd all the town—how strange,
That absence of all noise can fill a place!
The tiny bugle of a bee was heard—
Perhaps imagined; and a butterfly,
Stray'd from its clover fields, pass'd through the streets.

When to the churches crowds had thicken'd past,
And thinn'd away again, I turn'd my steps
To that green temple with the azure roof,
Wherein of old I worshipp'd, with the ban
Of friendly censure on me. For to seek
Religion in the Sabbath fields, and read
God's scriptures in the wild-flowers, was to break
The most imperilling of the ten commands,
And make me dangerous, and to be shunn'd
By every sound believer. But the years

Have only deepen'd my old love and faith :
The thin partition, that divides the seen
From the unseen, grows thinner, and the stones
Beneath my feet begin to throb. O Earth !
The beauty that I loved was not youth's dream,
Nor mine an erring faith, that Nature's lips
To loving hearts make utterance divine.
And now to find old haunts e'en deeplier fill'd
With inner being, gave old love and faith
Sweet reminiscence and approval deep.

I left the town, and took the slope that leads
Up to the round green hill that overlooks
The sweep of twenty miles : and as I clomb
The alter'd road, here levell'd and there wall'd,
I came to dim remember'd marks, like scars
Forgotten in the face of one we know.
And portions of the road, that were of old
Traversed by stepping-stones, had to be cross'd
Upon the self-same stones. The ones that splash'd
I knew, and took them with a tentful step.—
And there, the single ash, by gusty nights
Blown into gnarly knots. Ah me ! these years
Have I been roaming up and down the earth,
And every night drawn to a shelter'd bed,
Whilst thou, unhoused, in this bleak nook hast borne
The torture of the winds. But hence thy tough
And knotty strength. If we had never crept
From wind and wet, but given them brave front,
Much of thy rude health had been ours, and less

Of wheeze and rheum, and dread of blessed air.

I slowly clomb the hill, each step a thought,
And on its southern peak, as on a cloud,
I stood. The little world lay all beneath,
And noon sat high amid the spotless blue.
So calm and still, a steamboat's heavy beat
Far up the river came, and up the hill.
Her lazy smoke, between the sky and sea,
Trail'd, like the fabled serpent of the deep.
And where the river with the ocean meets,
The dreamy capes lay out against the sky
Like streaks of cloud. Around me, near and far,
Each clump of trees, with its old nodding tower,
Came to me like a mother's evening tale,
And at my feet the old town lay. I stood
Above its thin blue sheet of Sabbath smoke,
That like a calm lake hung upon the air.
I stood above the swallows, and they skimm'd
The fields of azure far above the streets.
I stood above the sparrows and the daws
That clamour'd round the steeple. Above all
I stood, and deep within my being came
The spirit of the picture. But no words
Can give it out again. I only name
The objects that it breathed in.

Then I turn'd
Inland, and from a northern peak re-lived
Old haunts of youth. Far in the background rose

The sharp blue hills, outlined against the sky,
And sunny gleams ran into dusky glens,
And I could hear, methought, the eagle's cry
Deep, deep within them. Nearer by, a wood
Of dark firs slept and dream'd of old weird days.
Imagination could not bring a voice
From that wood's silence: it was dead asleep.
And nearer still, the legendary holmes,
Broomy and green, with many a fairy ring;
Their burn that sings, its loneliness to cheer;
Their old meal-mill, built in against a bank,
Its dusty roof o'ergrown with grass and corn,
Its door choked up with docks, its water-wheel
Half hid in nettles and o'er-run with moss.
And nearer yet, green lanes, where I could see
The flaxen heads of children plucking flowers,
And hear their ringing voices. Close at hand,
The sweet red-linnet sat among the whins,
And piped a Doric song. But what avails
This bald vocabulary? I would give
The living something that came out of things,
And flow'd through all my being—this I'd give
To quicken you, but offer only words.

The sunset drew me to a western green
That looks far upland 'mong the golden hills.—
A crowd was on the green; for through the land
The fervour of revived religion ran.
Long evening shadows slanted to the east,
The river, widened to a lake of gold,

Lay mirroring the sunset ; and a psalm,
On wings of simple harmony, arose,
And pass'd into the evening as a part
Of its own beauty. Amidst bended eyes,
A white-hair'd elder, with upturnèd brow
To listening Heaven, breathed the prayer of all.
Then some spoke fierce reproof, some dove-like hope,
Some dealt damnation, and some sprinkled balm.
But there was one that spoke, who seem'd to lead
The order of the worship. Him I knew
In early youth, his years scarce more than mine.
And this is he, dull pate ! so glib, so pat,
So confident, so full of telling texts,
So spirit-stirring, and withal so changed !
His words were manna to their hungry souls ;
But—shall I own it ?—they were gall to me.
Here has he rested peacefully at home,
And all the affluence of a mind matured
Comes graciously unto him. I have ranged
From land to land, and sail'd the thoughtful seas,
And heard and seen a world-deal more than he,
And crept from blind belief to unbelief,
And struggled out of that,—yet here I stand,
My mind a ravell'd skein, loose ends of thought,
With no continuous thread of any kind :
And place me where he speaks, I'd find my thoughts
All run to dusty wool, no threads at all,
And which, if beaten out, would only blind !

The true or false, the good or bad, he knows,

Without misgiving, and can set it down
Without a reservation. But, with me,
The true and false are somewhat false and true ;
And when I come to know a thing, it turns
Some other side and passes into doubt.

Yet is not each new doubt an upward step?
And since no human faculty need hope
To bound the last remove of any thought,
Tis weakness to be fixed and say *we know*.

Thank God, I know not anything, but live
In thoughtful ignorance, and give wide marge
To opposite beliefs, despising none,
Yet taking none as final. Thus, each day
Breaks like a new creation ; every look
Takes some new wonder out of things seal'd up
As known and done with ; and a child-like trust
Of boundless possibilities retains
The full free joy of childhood in the man.

And are we not all children, we that hold
The everlasting heritage of life?
We do not lay aside exhausted thoughts :
They open into inner cells, and keep
A reach beyond the thinker. He that stops
At any point, believing it the last,
Has not the thought exhausted, but himself.

If I have envied thee and thy brave gift

Of marshall'd speech, wherewith thou seem'st to storm
The very walls of Heaven, and all hearts
Take captive with thee, yet I am consoled.
The broken sentence of a backward soul,
The pray'r begun in words, lost in a sigh,
The helpless, begging tear, the upward look,
May scale those walls and breach an entrance there,
When rounded periods only beat the air.

XXIII.

I often think our *wants* have given us more
Than our possessions ; for a thing possess'd
Soon ceases to be *thought* of—and possess'd.

Deep buried in these streets of filth and din,
And jostling crowds, how doubly sweet to me
The country village and the mountain-side !
The woods and meadows come into my mind,
And live in me, since I may not in them.
The morning milk-cart brings with it the farm,
And gives it to my longings, and the squire,
Who comes in search of *life*, enriches me
With the domain that he has left behind.
Their fields and herds, their gardens, woods and lawns,
Could sink no trulier into my heart
Were I the squire and farmer. They are mine
Without their trouble—bought with golden love.
There is no truer purchase : love a thing,
'Tis thine. The whole world cannot break the bond,
Or make it any stronger. We forget
That by the mind alone are things possess'd.
Our long day-dream we spend in making them,
By some imagined outward bond, our own :
Misfortune wakens us, or death at last,
And all our tenures melt, save that of love.

So given are we to realize our wants,
That when I've been condemn'd to country life—
For which my city days so much had pined—
I straight began the city to re-live.
The country served the lungs with sweet new air,
Gave bracing to the limbs, bronze to the cheeks—
Grew admirable cabbages : but life
Fell also into vegetable sloth.
I felt a need of the great city's crush,
Its theatres and churches, halls and marts,
Its virtues and its vices—yea, its crimes—
To stir the under-currents that impel
The tide of being. If I seldom mix'd
In these when with them, but still lived recluse,
The conscious *might have*, seem'd to be enough.
I lived them in the faces that I pass'd.
The preacher's fervour and the actor's passion
Break through stone walls, give spirit to the winds :
We breathe them in the air along the streets.
We catch the unheard music of the halls
In people's steps : and the romance of ships
Comes to us in the sailor's swarthy face,
As through the streets he swings.—In sooth, it needs
Not the material presence of a thing
To have it and enjoy it. If I lose
A much prized book that I have barely read,
How eagerly I read it in the loss,
And make it doubly mine ! I almost think
A wish'd-for book, that we have never read,
And only know its theme, is thus made ours.

'Twould seem the craving someway draws the thoughts
From Nature's store, or from the author's brain;
And when we get the book, we already know
Its best conclusions.—There's one sea of mind—
The very God in whom all souls exist—
From whom they draw, for ever, life and thought,
In ways to them unknown. All books, and arts,
And sciences, are scoopings from that sea;
And they grow old and stagnate; but the sea
Is new and fresh for ever. It supplies
The well-springs of all being. We have known
Of knowledge got by study, and dear sight
Burnt out with midnight books: but genius draws
The selfsame knowledge from the springs that break
Far down in its own nature.

Thus, there needs
Be no vain frets that one has not been born
In lines more pleasant, and with stronger aids.
These could have help'd him only to escape
His own ideal. Let him blithely tread
His own forbidding path, and he will find
The things he dreamt lay in the pleasant lines,—
And which, thus found, shall make his life unique.

XXIV.

He came again, the pastor we had lost—
Came from the long death-grapple in the West,
With battles in his soul, and on his cheek
The bronze of roofless camps. For he had been
To give his country, not the arm that smites,
But that which nerves all arms—a dauntless heart,
Brave from immortal trust, strong by the right,
Wise through the beat of liberty for all.
And he had been in hospitals and fields,
Tending the sick in body and in soul,
And watching the great movements of the war;
And, haply, throwing in the loaded thought
That burst, through other hands, into a deed.

But now the tide of Southern victory,
That long had set against the North, recoil'd;
And, beaten down into its slimy deeps,
Gave murmur of defeat and coming peace.
Freedom could freely breathe again, could see
The rivets dropping from the bond-man's chains,
The starry flag of liberty unshorn
Of any of its stars; forgiving peace
Receiving back her brave but wayward sons;—
And he whom we had lost could spare himself
From patriotic cares to visit us.

It was the autumn season when he came—
The time of sunny skies and wingèd clouds.
Our lovely chapel, which he loved so well,
Seem'd smiling amid tears, as light and shade
Alternately pass'd through it; and some eyes,
That I could name, spoke welcome through their tears.

New from the clanging war, how still to him
Our autumn skies and gorse-clad hills, our vales,
Dotted with villages and gleaming spires,
And, all around, our wealth of golden fields!
On such a picture he had look'd, and such
He made the key-note of his thoughts to us.

O, paradise of beauty, love and joy—
Bountiful earth, thus in thy autumn peace,
The counterpart of Heaven! How is it men
Cannot give up their warrings, and at once
Enter upon the golden reign of love?
Enough in thy abundant lap for all,
And much, O earth, to spare; and, for the soul,
A benison of beauty without end!

Could the beatitudes of Heaven be here
Enter'd upon, there were no need of earth.
These glimpses of pure bliss come to foreshow
The future that awaits us—earthly strife,
The purifying furnace that prepares
The ore of nature for the golden reign.—
Not even the divinest men shall rest,

Nor they that dream of poesy and peace,
Till fused in fiery troubles manifold,—
Our Milton journey'd into Italy
To realize a paradise :—" Come back !
Thy country is in flames ! "—And he came back.
There was no paradise on earth for him—
Unless it were that one in his own soul,
Which keeps him still immortal on the earth.—
Even He that brought the gospel of good will
And peace for all men, could Himself find none,
Without the blood and scourges of the Cross.—
So, too, with him whom we had lost and found—
Found only for a day, again to lose.
Our island home, at peace with all the world,
And prosperously at rest within itself,
Where peacefully he did his Master's work,
Became no place for him, when came the boom
Of treacherous battle from his own loved home.

What wonder that he struck some notes of war—
He that had stood upon the mangled fields,
Amidst the fallen, while the fierce pursuit
Swept on to other fields, and left behind
The dying and the dead? At Gettysburg
He walked among the ranks of gory death,
Where friends and foes, and armaments of war
Lay mass'd in charnel heaps of blood-glued wreck,
And groans and hymns, curses and prayers arose !—
Yet all around this hell of war, birds sang,
And flowers sweeten'd the infected air.

The great blue sky, uplifting the black pall
Of fiery battle, look'd serenely down.
The moon, too, came in peace, and watch'd all night ;
And peacefully the glittering camps of heaven
Lit up *their* tented field and look'd on *this*.—
O God ! how is it that the moon and stars,
And the serene blue sky, did not weep blood
And shudder, when they saw that charnel field ?
Was it in mockery they look'd such peace ?
Or did their calm foreshadow the great Heaven,
Whose proffer of sweet rest and endless life
Dwarfs into nothing even the direst means
Whereby its earth-born children may come home ?

Then, when the strife is over, and results
Are reckon'd up, how great the seeming loss
Even to Victory ! yet, in the end,
How great may be the gain, e'en to Defeat !
He cannot lose who battles for the right.
Nor can the path of nations be too stern,
Our individual journey be too bleak,
For Duty to attempt. The way may seem
In front to mock us with a wall of rock :
But on, still on ! and see how soon that wall
Will open out, to our enraptured gaze,
The pleasant valley, with its peaceful homes !

O faithless memory ! I vainly seek
Thus to re-live his thoughts—those thoughts that came
With more than all earth's riches on our minds,

And with such vivid beauty that I felt
"Now they are mine for ever!"—Are they lost?
Or, like the food we eat, the air we breathe,
Transform'd into our being?—Even so;
For then, as ever after he had spoken,
What strength we felt! what nearness unto God!
Duty, how clear! how steadfast the resolve
To do that duty, whatsoe'er betide!—
Yet, ask me what he said—I cannot tell.—
If, understandingly, we hear or read,
And with a sort of rapture in the heart,
Then though, out of that mood, we cannot say
That this, or that, is what we heard or read,
Still is it none the less enwoven within;
And, as life's web unfolds, it will be seen
In golden threads long after.

'Twas the dream
Of one bright Sabbath day. But we awoke,
And he was gone—gone as before he went,
Not knowing what a debtor he had made
Of one who was too poor to give him thanks!

XXV.

You look at what I've done and what I am,
And, from the vantage of your own success,
Tell what I should have done and might have been,
Or might become, if yet I would do so.

Alas! alas! vain counsel. You would turn,
Into the channel'd vale, the brook that sings
Its heaven-appointed song in lonesome glen.
Of rare utility the deepen'd stream
That bears its wealth of barges, and brings joy
To citizens and villagers, well fed:
But he that wanders, lonely and half lost,
To seek, he knows not what, among the hills,
Oft gets a whisper from the untutor'd brook,
That makes him richer than the freighted stream.—
A simple native growth you would transform
Into the floral wonder of a day.
There's luxury of beauty in that heath,
Nurtured within conservatory shades:
But, lonely on the mountain, I have caught
Diviner tinklings in the purple bells.

And if, my friend, I *could* reach the success
That you predict, I know not if I *would*.
'Twould not be *my* success, unless I gave

The offering to the world I *want* to give.
For each should bring his true, his only self,
And give that freely, be it praised or damn'd.
The world wants nothing else, and, damn'd or praised,
'Twill be to the world something that it needs.
The primrose and the violet, and each
New comer, breathes into the sweeten'd air
Its own peculiar being; and each gives—
Who knows?—a something needed by the air:
For has not God in each a special thought?
They do not breathe in vain. Could we, like them,
Yield up our inspiration, great or small,
Each life would be a blessing to the world.

But few there be that do not choke the spring,
Or turn aside the stream. Not knowing God
Has some new thought for each, we waste our lives
In seeking to repeat some faithful one,
Whose glory lures us, while our own sinks back
To the eternal cistern, and we lose—
Or get some poor reflection of—them both.

Thanks for thy counsel, friend. There was a time
When 'twould have been thrice welcome. But I've
learn'd
That he who would unfold God's thought in him—
And which alone is *his* success—must take
His counsel from within. If in thy heart
Springs early a desire to do one thing
Above all other things; if that has grown

And deepen'd with the years, while each new stroke
Towards achievement fill'd thee with a joy,
Which thou couldst tell was heavenly—do that,
Though not a soul, as yet, applaud the deed.

'Tis true, I might give that which would amuse—
E'en while amusing, teach the passing hour,
And gain me plaudits, profit, and a name.
Alas! however much I might incline,
Time serves not, stern necessity forbids,
And I forego the elaborative work.

Give thanks for this: the world's too full of books:
It breaks my heart, that life's too short to read
Even a choice selection. Add still more?
I tremble, friend, upon the brink of crime!

Yet do I burn to write. I may not rest
In virtuous silence; but I would be brief.
I'd bring some linnet-warblings from the brake
Between the fields of mirth and glebes of tears;—
I'd bring some daisies from the meads of heaven;
Some pearly shells from the eternal shore;
And from the whispering conclaves of the gods,
Some high immortal thoughts. These would I give,
As simply and as truly as I may.

God help my weakness! I have not the wing
To reach the spheres; and, ever when I rise,
Some small imperious duty calls me back;—

Nor yet the searching analytic brain
To grapple with my subject, and expose
Its strength or weakness. If I ever give
High utterance, it comes, I know not how.—
The power, the culture, and the leisure—all
Are wanting, yet I'd do what needs them all!
What then? All truth and beauty do not come
From labour'd fields; and if I may not cull
A large, rich offering, I may pluck, at least,
Some wayside flowers, not proudly to be pass'd;—
Or, driven to the moors of thought, may bring
Some rarity the favour'd ne'er could find;
And thus my speciality fulfil.

And yet, where is the need of even that?—
I lose all heart to see the floods of thought,
Drain'd through the press, and then lost, lost,
As in a quicksand! And the shelves of books,
Innumerable, glorious, some divine,
But most unopen'd, and still more unread!—
They kill my hope! what need, what use of more?
It never can o'ertake the daily race—
It over-rides me quite—O, help me, Heaven!

What! can it be that books have higher life
Than this of printed character? Can thought
Have any real being in these signs?
Or do they but dispose us to receive
The inflow of the elsewhere living thought?
If trivial words, as some believe, do pass

Into eternal record, how much more
That glorious agony, an earnest book!
If all this beauty—forest, lake, and hill—
And even the fact of city, loom, or plough,
Be but the symbol, and the outer side
Of finer beauty and of truer fact,
To which death's gate gives entrance, so are books
The symbols only of their real selves.
They pass into a higher type than print,
And wait us in the libraries of heaven.—
Write on, write on, ye who have aught to give:
Ye have a higher audience otherwhere;
And we shall overtake you by-and-by.

MUSINGS.

THE GARLAND.

No cultivated garden did he own,
  But found his bent by wayside and in forest:
He gather'd flowers where seed was never sown,
    Unless by Nature's Florist.

He lack'd the cultured mind, so richly prized,
  But in the wastes of soul found endless choosings,
And cull'd a garland, not to be despised,
    Of transient thoughts and musings.

RESIGNATION.

One writes a book, and wins the admiring age—
One gives to it a deeper toned belief—
One makes the world his own applauded stage—
One holds its wealth in fief.

Each to his lot: unliterary mine;
Unholy, unheroic and unrich;
I can but hope there are some notes divine
Within its highest pitch.

I strike my fetters, and, above their clank,
Methinks I hear some better music ring;
And be it mine the scatter'd notes to rank,
Their harmony to sing.

I've long'd for nobler work; but now I seek
No higher plane than this to me assign'd;
And trust to snatch a cadence more unique
Than elsewhere I could find.

THOUGHTS.

His thoughts—the truest features of the man—
Above all else deserve to be recorded:
Nothing in history more living than
A thought when deftly worded.

The words are to the thought its earthly frame:
They die in time, and then we deem it ended:
But, like the immortal spirit whence it came,
The lost has but ascended.

Thoughts do not die. Some pass to realms of glory
At once, as from the flower the odour flows;
While some live seal'd in words from ages hoary—
The ottar of the rose.

And so, according to the strong completeness
Of that expression, their earth-life prolongs:
And some have grown, thro' its surpassing sweetness,
Almost time-during songs.

FIRST BE, THEN TEACH.

If, Poet, thou wouldst live beyond the age,
First *be* the thing thy teachings would create:
Make thine own life oracular, thy page
Will then be lord of Fate.

A few unlettered sentences Christ gave
Out of His purity. The years may bear
Their unregretted learning to the grave—
His words we cannot spare.

LOWLY WORK.

Buying and selling, casting up accounts—
  Each day the same, the same—so runs my story.
And all that I may live! To this amounts
    The sum of all my glory.

I scorn my petty hopes, my vulgar fears,
  And cry for something worthier to grapple.
Yet Newton traced the law that rules the spheres—
    Not scorn'd the falling apple.

So, in our little dealings, humble trades,
  Our small besetting cares, our simplest duty,
We trace the all of Right, the golden threads
    Of everlasting Beauty.

The rude work finish'd, reckon'd nothing worth,
  And closed the bargain of the lowliest vendor—
Lowly and rude put off their garbs of earth,
    And on their robes of splendour.

I CANNOT.

I cannot well be one of you: the leisure
You nobly use in lifting up the lowly,
Is all denied to me, and Time, my treasure,
Impress'd to ends unholy.

But though I daily mingle in life's struggle,
I am not wholly torn from rest or leaning,
And you shall hear the windings of a bugle,
Not wholly without meaning.

And from the spoils of trade, the shams of office,
Power's rank corruptions, fashion's vain abuses,
It may be I will pluck for you some trophies
To put to higher uses.

Not gems or gold—though well the world might spare them—
Nor plumes, nor aught that marks the lofty bearing;
But trophies I will bring, and you will wear them
When those are out of wearing.

DUTY.

I reach a duty, yet I do it not,
And therefore see no higher: but if done,
My view is brighten'd, and another spot
Seen on my moral sun.

For, be the duty high as angel's flight,
Fulfil it, and a higher will arise,
E'en from its ashes. Duty is infinite—
Receding as the skies.

And thus it is, the purest most deplore
Their want of purity. As fold by fold,
In duties done, falls from their eyes, the more
Of Duty they behold.

Were it not wisdom, then, to close our eyes
On duties crowding only to appal?
No: Duty is our ladder to the skies,
And, climbing not, we fall.

THE BOOK.

I cannot hold the book as one inspired
  Peculiarly, or more divinely sent
Than other books, which seem as deeply fired
  With brands from Heaven lent.

Yet, when I think how many shrouded ages
  Of burden'd souls have read, with brightening eye,
The promises and marvels of its pages,
  And laid their burdens by;

Or call up scenes through which that book was guide—
  The Pilgrims that fore-lived the *Stripes and Stars*;
The Scottish Covenant, and bleak hill-side;
  Or Cromwell and his wars;—

Yes, when I think of these, though reason fails
  To see the inspiration you assign,
The deeper logic of the heart prevails,
  And owns the book divine.

IN A ROMAN-CATHOLIC CHAPEL.

The robèd priest, the necromantic table,
The kneeling crowd, rapt bosoms, eyes ecstatic;
The rattled beads, the prayers—a mutter'd Babel—
And pageantry dramatic!

What keen religious eyes do they inherit,
That thro' these blinding forms can see the Father,
Whilst I must vainly strain my troubled spirit
One trace of Him to gather!

But, as I sat in trouble, gazed in wonder,
The heavy air by sudden strains was riven—
The organ roll'd a peal of sweetest thunder—
And God spoke out of Heaven.

For, smother as we may with forms erroneous,
And textual complications of a trinity,
The unconscious instrument, with lips harmonious,
Interprets the Divinity.

THE ONLY STRENGTH.

These arms of strength that work, propel, and draw—
These limbs that bear us on in stalwart pride,
Were each as feeble as a bruisèd straw,
But for the soul inside.

The tempest-wrestling trees were doubled up,
And stone and iron, dust upon the wind—
All strength were weakness—even the winds would drop,
But for an inward mind.

Earth could give no resistance to our tread—
Would yield like smoke beneath us,—star with star.
That walk in peaceful beauty overhead,
Fall blindly into war.

Mind is the only strength—the mind we've deem'd
Product of matter—matter's origin;
And earth and men are not what they have seem'd—
God earth, and spirits men.

GOD EVER NEAR.

What sunshine falls around the darkest lot—
  How soon its haunting spectres disappear—
When through its trouble breaks the living thought
    That God is ever near!

Near, in the lowly grass, the lordly trees,
  The summer flowers, and their delicious breath;
Near, in our hallowed temples, and the breeze
    That sweeps the lonely heath.

Near, in the closet, in the peopled streets,
  Out on the marvellous deep, in glittering show'rs;
Near, in the human heart, that beats and beats
    Without decree of ours.

For we are wandering through enchanted land:
  The tiniest eye-bud peeping from the sod,
Touch'd with the living thought—the spirit-wand—
    It opens into God.

And wherefore should this meeting free the slave,
  Enrich misfortune, lift the mourner's pall?
God is the secret good of all we crave;
    And having God, gives all.

YORK MINSTER.

York Minster! what a monument is this,
Out of one meek and simple life uprist!
Within these walls, what sceptic but needs kiss
Thy garment's hem, O Christ!

For not on fable, but immortal fact,
Could anything so real be up-rear'd—
Thy every thought enshrined, thy every act
Re-acted and endear'd.

It were enough to glorify thy name,
This one great monument, this single one:
But only think how many such proclaim
God's best-belovèd Son!

The domèd cities, and the steepled towns,
The village spires that gleam at morn and even.
The belfry on the bleak unpeopled downs,
Lone hearts, to worship given.

Lord Christ! methinks they challenge and reprove
The warrior's pillar and the sage's shrine,
And bid thy weaker brothers look above
To something more divine.

FACES AND PLACES.

My journeyings lead me on through many places,
But none of them the home I could desire;
And in the streets I meet a thousand faces
Without one to admire.

But make our home in any place—each day
Does everything within its bounds or near it,
Assume a homely beauty, as if they
Put out their inner spirit.

Approach the most forbidding face so near
That we can see the truer face behind,
And in some brightening feature will appear
The beauty of a friend.

The secret of all love for friends and homes
Is beauty. It lies deeper than the skin;
And if not ours outside to-day, it comes
To-morrow from within.

BOOKS.

I cannot think the glorious world of mind,
  Embalm'd in books, which I can only see
In patches, though I read my moments blind,
    Is to be lost to me.

I have a thought that, as we live elsewhere,
  So will those dear creations of the brain;
That what I lose unread, I'll find, and there
    Take up my joy again.

O then the bliss of blisses, to be freed
  From all the wants by which the world is driven;
With liberty and endless time to read
    The libraries of Heaven!

HOME-CONTENT.

Content, a thousand-fold, to bide at home,
And hold the kingdom of a rounded mind,
Which breaks into a chaos when I roam,
And wastes on every wind.

The ready wit, the polish gain'd by travel,
The widen'd views and large experience got,
Are little compensation for the ravel
And waste loose ends of thought.

The affluence of thought flows inwardly;
Travel goes outward—fights against the stream:
O rest in quiet thought, and life will be
As rich as any dream.

DUNFERMLINE
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HOME-BEAUTY.

The upland farm, the cot upon the heath,
The fisher's hut, where sandy salt winds come—
The bleakest home is warm with beauty's breath
To him that calls it home.

To him, no beauty like those lowing sheds,
Or gusty ash that creaks before the door,
Or glittering shells that gem the sandy beds,
Or foam that tufts the shore.

In man and Nature kindred spirits move,
And beauty is the union of the two:
The things we deem most lovely, and most love,
Are those she meets us through.

Long living in our homely places brings
Repeated union through them: they are loved:
And thus it often is that simplest things
Have most our passion moved.

A HARD BOOK.

The creeds and histories of all the ages
  Are handled in this book, and turn'd, and toss'd.
I grope my way throughout its labour'd pages,
    Blindfolded and half lost.

O, is it lack of brain, or want of learning,
  That keeps me boring—mole-like in my night—
Through erudition not one ray discerning
    Of the redeeming light?

I close the book with which I've vainly striven,
  And humbly on my ignorance I fall,
When, looking up, the starry gaze of heaven
    Explains, explodes it all!

SUMMER-RESURRECTION.

When Nature crouches from the biting air,
And even thought is paralyzed by winter,
I feel my spirit is not anywhere,
And Heaven too far to enter.

But summer comes with flocks of woolly clouds,
And rainbows, sunny showers, and wingèd shadows,
And mazy hedgerows, and green-mantled woods,
And honey-scented meadows;

The mingled breath of flowers, the choral strain
That thrills the air and shames our petty sadness:
The sweet abundance, the receptive brain,
The almost Heavenly gladness:

A resurrection in the earth and sky,
And winter's ills forgotten and forgiven,—
Ah, then, I feel we only need to die
To be at once in Heaven!

THE YEAR'S FIRST SWALLOW.

The year's first swallow! See, his sparkling wings
  Shake off the tears of April's latest day;
And from the wing-cleft air he madly flings
    Fore-gleams of dewy May.

May, with her daisied meads and wimpling brooks,
  Her warm green lanes and choirs of piping throats,
Her woodlands with their sylvan sunny nooks,
    And bees with honey'd notes.

May on the rivers, silvering the vales,
  And on the mountains in their gauzy vests;
May on the ocean with its sleepy sails,
    And May within our breasts.

Season by season through all being lives—
  And we are kindred with the circling whole:
'Tis God in all, and not a breeze but gives
    Its soul unto our soul.

THE BREATH OF WHIN.

I smelt the whins in passing up the lane,
And years of childhood, crowded into minutes,
Swept through my bosom in a sweet sad train
Of butterflies and linnets.

I saw the fairies in the haunted dell,
The woodlands with their shadows bright and mazy;
I heard, on sunny banks, the sweet blue bell
Tinkling unto the daisy.

A thousand images arose within—
Forgotten images, in childhood noted;
And all awaken'd by a breath of whin
That in the loaning floated.

Forgetting is no losing; and if death
Be higher life, the life that lay before it,
May easily be restored, if thus a breath
Can faithfully restore it.

SYMBOLS.

The breathing flowers, the forest-buds unfurl'd,
  Are not the expanded seedlings that we ween,
But sweet transfigurations from the world
    That lies within the seen.

For this the type in which God prints His thought—
  This glorious theatre of shifting things:
And whosoever has its meaning caught,
    For him all Nature sings.

Wouldst thou hear Nature's voice? Be one with her,
  In simple purity, perennial youth;
Her child in wonder, and her worshipper
    In spirit and in truth.

Then will the daisy, from its modest eye,
  Let out its secrets, and the starry scroll,
River and ocean—all of earth or sky—
    Interpret to thy soul.

UNPAID WORK.

He hit the world's taste, and for what he gave
It more than paid him—fame and fortune squander'd.
He overdid its taste—became its slave;
It bought him, and he pander'd.

'Tis well to be repaid for what you give:
To work unpaid, for love of work, is better—
Bestowing all for nothing while you live—
And leave the world your debtor.

WEALTH OF THOUGHT.

Your thoughts so affluent that you vainly sigh
For corresponding words to give expression!
Be thankful, friend. I would to Heaven that I
Could make the same confession.

My sad complaint is poverty of thought.
Ah, do not deem my silence hidden talent.
Inspire me with your wealth, and I will not
Be any longer silent.

No: it will out itself in spite of me:
Thought and expression are the nearest neighbours;
And if not sung in chosen words, 'twill be
Told by my life and labours.

Give me the thought, and I will trust the lyre;
For, be it glibly sung or harshly stammer'd,
A living thought leaps out in words of fire,
Like red-hot iron hammer'd.

CONCEIT.

I pray thee do not cease to wring my heart,
  But still unfold my every imperfection.
God knows, each bosom has its weaker part,
    Its half insane affliction.

Yea, all save thine! Thou, by a grand conceit,
  Art on a faultless pinnacle of bleakness.
But rather would I in the lowly street
    Be still akin to weakness.

Endeavour, recognizing its defeats,
  Girds it afresh, and presses up and onward:
Endeavour with supposed perfection meets,
    And soon its course is downward.

So, never cease to tell how much I err,
  How much fall short of thy extoll'd achievement:
Admonishment be my encourager,
    And failure no bereavement.

MEN'S POSITIONS.

'Tis said that by his strongest faculty
The man is in his true position fitted :
Some domination chooses more than he—
Some native strength transmitted.

Alas ! I do not quarrel with my sphere :
I would fulfil it with becoming meekness :
But 'twas not native strength that brought me here,
So much as native weakness.

MODERN PROGRESS.

Discovery, and Science, and Invention—
The gods of modern progress—wonders three!
Who dare say, "This surpasses your pretension?"
Or, "Here your end shall be?"

Each day puts on some newer mode or fashion,
And old things suffer change, or take their leave—
Yea, everything but sentiment and passion:
They are as old as Eve.

From zone to zone the lightning bears our message—
But Right and Wrong no better understood:
O'er sea and land we speed with eagle passage—
No readier to do good.

Ah, what avails the progress? what reliance
On constant change? It is no onward move,
If we advance not in His deeper science
That binds the world in love!

THE PRESAGE.

O, flashing wire, fierce rail, and ploughing steamer!
Of all this haste, where is the use, the need?
The sage as wise, the poet as fine a dreamer
Would be, without your speed.

Earth's princely merchants, and her humbler traders,
Wanting your aid had surely been more blest;
For what have they become but bold invaders—
Each other's spoil and pest!

The mental appetite, for which you cater
So busily, has turn'd from solid victuals,
To live on almost hourly news. We fritter
Our time away in littles.

But what comes out of it? The flashing message
O'er land and sea; this rapid flight of steam—
They are the growing upward, and the presage
Of our immortal dream.

This passion, deeply rooted in the spirit,
For sudden knowledge, instantaneous speed,
Foreshadows what we fully shall inherit
When from the body freed.

PRESENCES.

To what dark chambers of the heart or brain
Do all our welling thoughts at times retreat?
One presence seals my fountains, and in vain
The rock of thought I beat.

Some other comes, and then, though he be dumb,
My seals are broken and my fountains leap;
And mind, that felt so shallow, has become
A yet unfathom'd deep.

I may not read the old astrologies,
Nor tell how moon-touch'd seas should ebb and flow,
Or mind should be more tidal than the seas,—
But that it is, I know.

SEED-THOUGHTS.

A seed-thought falls into the mind, and we
  Would make the thing available in song.
Not yet: 'twill not be forced: but let it be—
    Its time will come ere long.

And never fear but that the nursing soil,
  Without our conscious aid will keep it warm,
Until creative art, with little toil,
    May breathe it into form.

For in the mind are many unknown powers,
  Which re-create the seed that seems to rot,
And many rays of soul, and spirit-showers,
    From heaven, that feed our thought.

THE THOUGHT-SPHERE.

I know that nothing beautiful or true
  Is of ourselves created, and believe
That from the earth, or yon mysterious blue,
  We get all that we give.

Nor does the printed page on which I look
  Contain the very thought. It pass'd at birth
Into some spirit-character, the book
  Only its sign on earth.

Yet, if it do not give what doth appear,
  There is this marvel in the printed word:
It puts us in communion with the sphere
  Wherein all thought is stored.

SLEEP AND DEATH.

Brain-toss'd for sleep, the more that I entreat,
The balmy miracle forsakes my bed.
If sleep, so like to death, be thus so sweet,
How blessed to be dead!

This wakefulness is madness; and to sleep
Were passing into sanity. What though
I never woke again? From rest so deep
I should not seek to go.

For death is but a deeper sleep. We seem
From all this conscious being to be riven,
Yet have escaped into the glorious dream
Of everlasting Heaven.

And think not that a dream is absent fact,
Its life less true than waking. Is there one
Who has not risen from a dreamèd act
Sorry or glad 'twas done?

Be it of grief or joy, it is as much
A verity as this our waking strife;
And, howsoever named, my thought is, such
Will be eternal life.

What! With the incongruities of dreams?
Even so. This life which we so real deem—
To him who is not fully in it, seems
As mad as any dream!

BEAUTY.

There is not anything the soul more craves
Than Beauty. It exalts the merest line
That through our every-day experience waves—
Seeks blindly the Divine.

For what, in very truth, is this we crave,
Which neither loads the board nor fills the purse?
Yet, wanting which, the earth were but a grave,
And life itself a curse?

The visual presence of the living God,
That permeates creation, comes and goes
In substance and in shadow, greens the sod,
And paints and scents the rose:

And flows through man into his works of art—
The picture's glow, the statue's breathing gleam;—
For not a touch of Beauty stirs the heart
But comes of the Supreme!

ART.

Art is medicinal. If I am long
Without the exercise of poesie,
My spirit ails, my body's somewhat wrong,
My heart beats "Woe is me!"

And if the rhythmic measure is my choice,
'Tis also my necessity. I weave
The threaded thought: it makes no laurell'd noise;
But all my ailments leave.

And so, I doubt not, his creation makes
A healthier current in the Painter's veins:
Or that his marble inspiration takes
Away the Sculptor's pains.

And music, that usurps a sweet control
In any heart through which its marvel floats,
Is physic to the body and the soul
Of him that builds the notes.

The spirit craves to do its noblest thing.
It is a poison in the blood, suppressed.
And thus the Arts are medicines that bring
Healing, and joy, and rest.

EVER YOUNG.

The earth is young for ever: day by day
It drinks new life from God's perpetual youth:
And why need *we* grow old, if thus we may
Drink daily God's new truth?

To sink in age and yet immortal be,
Are thoughts of contradiction. If we lay
Our destinies beyond the grave, then we
Grow younger every day.

For man is not this frame that wastes to earth,
But soul that lives on Beauty, Truth, and Right—
Each pulse of which gives new access of birth,
Unknown to death or blight.

To catch the new revealings in their flow,
Of countless nature, from the hidden spheres,
Now and for evermore,—this is to grow
Young in despite of years.

ALL SEASONS BLESSED.

The village lies in mist; the rounding hills
  Are nowhere seen; the rime lies white along
The fields; and on the gable robin trills
    His lone late autumn song.

The trees droop in the fog, their dank leaves fall
  Sheer down, like dreaming stones that make no
    sound;
The unseen mill and far-off trains seem all
    Beat, beating under ground.

The life of summer has gone out; but, lo!
  Each season takes the heart: to-day we miss
The balmy sunshine, lightly let it go,
    And turn to fireside bliss.

THE BEGGAR.

She shiver'd in the snow, and, limping, drew
About her a scant robe of one thin fold:
Her head and feet were bare; the sharp wind blew;
She sobb'd for very cold.

No house, no hap, no hope to bid her live;
Her very soul shrank from the biting air,—
Yet I, well clad, could pass her, and not give
The cloak I well could spare.

O, poor in heart! which beggar the more cold—
I, doubly clad, or she in rags so thin?
Her poverty a garment's scanty fold—
My poverty within!

PHILANTHROPY.

Alas ! this poor philanthropy that springs
From Intellect that talks, not Heart that gives,
Avails me little—to its object brings
Pity, but not relieves.

It pinches thought ; it cramps the poet's line ;
Gives upward flight a weakness in the wing ;
And that which almost reaches the divine,
Falls back, a mortal thing.

But he, if such there be in modern days,
With whom to see a duty is to do,
Grows by his acts, and all he does or says
Takes an immortal hue.

THE BLUE-EYED CALF.

A blue-eyed calf—as feeble as a shadow—
Comes through our streets at noon. To living breath
It came this morn, but knows nor milk nor meadow—
Driven from birth to death!

What money-value in a thing so tender?
Yet men of slaughter quarrel for the prize.
How innocent of purchaser or vendor,
Those unpolluted eyes!

It looks untroubled through the troubled city;
It looks as if its life might never end;
It looks into my soul more thoughtful pity
Than soul may comprehend.

I have no striking moral for my picture,
But only fix the outlines ere they melt,
Content to leave it open to thy stricture
If thou feel what I felt.

THE RIVER IN STORM.

When winds rise in the night and moan and shriek,
  And windows rattle, walls and chimneys shiver,—
Ah, then it is my heart's wild joy to seek
    Next morn the bellowing river!

And grand the roaring scene, the murk eclipse—
  Winds, waves, and clouds, in one wild mingled swelter—
The sea-dash'd piers, the tempest-beaten ships
    That seek our haven for shelter;

The seamen's shouts, half stifled in the blast,
  The anchors plunging and the cables rattling,
The flapping sails around the broken mast,
    Men with the tempest battling:

A fine upheaving of all energy—
  A quickening soul through man and Nature driven!
O River, with thy beaten piers, from thee
    I come refresh'd and shriven!

THE RIVER IN CALM.

A charm is thine, O River! rage or rest;
And if thy storms enrapture us, thy calms
Do none the less into the mortal breast
Pour their immortal balms.

Thou dreamy River, with thy freighted barks,
Resting upon their shadows, and, far through
Thy sunny deeps, the clouds, like sacred arks,
Floating in gulfs of blue!

The boatmen's voices, and their measured stroke,
Heard, but themselves unseen, far up the stream;
The ferry-steamers and their trailing smoke,
Moving in placid dream!

O River, calm and beautiful! O Peace,
That lies in folds about the flinty piers!
Great calm, that gives our fretted brains release—
Thought, melted into tears!

SEEMING EVILS.

The only earthly ills we need to fear
  Are those that we ourselves could have prevented.
All others only *seem* to afflict us here,
    And need not be lamented.

'Twas somewhat thus the ancient Stoic meant:
  That were those seeming evils evils truly,
The gods had given us power to prevent,
    Or meet their coming duly.

For they are from above, come by a law
  That shapes our lives, despite our fancied merit:
The gods are good, and ever seek to draw
    Us nearer them in spirit.

They love and chasten. To the eyes of Time
  Their good seems bad, their law a contradiction.
They build hard steps to heaven and bid us climb:
    They win us by affliction.

CONSCIOUS-WRONG.

Yes, others do it: wherefore may not I?
They prosper, they enjoy, and never rue it.—
Well, if they do not *feel* the acted lie,
'Tis little sin to do it.

But I both see and feel it deeply wrong,
And thus the crime of doing it were deeper;
Nor I go scathless as the prosperous throng
That own no inward keeper.

'Tis not that in return the smitten smite,
Nor that outflowing injury is tidal;
But evermore for him who sees the right,
The wrong is suicidal.

THE RAIN FALLS EQUALLY.

The rain falls on the unjust and the just,
And worldly fortune comes alike to both.
What heart is here for Justice? Let it trust
All to the inward growth.

Justice rewards itself; and if its deeds
Seem only to bring poverty and grief,
These also are the rain of Heaven, that feeds
The plant to higher leaf.

If plants, themselves corrupt, get plenteous rain,
'Tis not to bless them, but to make them worse:
And who has seen Injustice truly gain?
Its seeming gain a curse.

'Tis not in nature that the prize of wrong
Can bless the gainer. They that foully win,
Destroy the good of winning, yet prolong
The multiplying sin.

For spirit has its chemistry. The gain
That comes of wrong transmutes itself to loss;
And, dreaming it has struck a golden vein,
Wakens to find it dross.

So, if the rain does fall alike on all,
It does not work in all a like result.
We cannot judge the blessing from the fall,
Its action so occult.

THE GORSY GLEN.

Between Loch-Foyle and Greenan's ancient fort,
From Derry's famous walls a little way,
There dreams a gorsy glen, in whose lone heart
I mused a Sabbath day.

A nameless glen, one mass of yellow gorse,
That hides the sparkle of a trotting burn,
Save where in dimpling pools it stays its force,
Or takes a rocky turn.

The sandy linnet sang, the tiny wren
Pour'd in the burn its tiny melodies.
The air was honey-laden, and the glen
All murmurous with bees.

A straggling crow, upon its woodward way,
Might start an echo with its rusty croak;
But all around the quiet Sabbath lay,
Hush'd from the week-day yoke.

Near, yet all hidden from, the ways of men,
No foot into my sanctuary stole;
I wander'd with my shadow in the glen—
The only living soul.

Yet, many more were in the glen, 'twould seem :
I heard, or thought I heard, their whisper'd words,
And knew 'twas not the bees, the babbling stream,
Or carol of the birds.

And sometimes through the sunniest gleams of day
There pass'd a light intenser than the gleam—
A living soul without its grosser clay?
Or but my waking dream?

Who knows? who knows? The dream to-day is found
A verity to-morrow. Things have been
For ever with us in our daily round,
Though now but newly seen.

Ah! could we by a purer life refine
The veil that keeps the inward from our ken,
No lonely fellowship had then been mine
Within the gorsy glen.

I KNOW THE FACE.

I know the face of him who with the sphere
Of unseen presences communion keeps.
His eyes retain its wonders in their clear
Unfathomable deeps.

His every feature, rugged or refined,
Shines from the inner light; and, large or small
His earthly state, he from the world behind
Brings wealth that beggars all.

He brings the thought that gives to earthly things
Eternal meaning; brings the living faith
That, even now, puts on the immortal wings,
And clears the shadow, Death.

This in his face I see; and, when we meet,
My earthliness is shamed by him; but yet
Takes hope to think that, in the unholy street,
Such men are to be met.

FLOWERS.

She brought rich flowers to our cottage home—
Rare blossoms, grown upon no common stem.
Our little ones into the parlour come
Stealing, to gaze at them.

They last all through the sweeten'd week, and raise
The benediction of their breathing psalm.
From them, and from the living flowers that gaze,
We drink renewing balm.

Children and flowers lie very near to God,
And Heaven with them is but a short remove.
They yield us glimpses of the blest abode,
And win us with its love.

If thou wouldst charm me with the wine of thought,
And give sweet inspiration to my hours,
And wake the melodies in Heaven taught—
O bring the chaliced flowers!

———

OUR CHAPEL.

Not in all England's temple-built domain
Can I behold such beauty as I may
Within the blue-ceil'd, marble-pillar'd fane,
That draws my Sabbath day.

I almost get all that my soul can need
Of worship, merely there to sit and look;
For Beauty is my idol, half my creed—
God's universal book.

So, in its beauty has our chapel grown
From Thee, O God! a very poem inspired;
And, drinking in its every line and tone,
My heart is never tired.

Up in the azure heaven of its roof
I lose my thoughts, as in God's outer skies:
The checker'd panes shed down the golden woof,
Like beams from angel-eyes.

The sun throws in the window's pictured scenes,
And Jesus moves in light from seat to seat;
The Marys come, and Christ's own Galileans
Pass by with silent feet.

But when the organ stirs the enraptured air,
And touches chords our wisdom may not reach,
Ah, then we have the sermon and the pray'r,
Though none were there to preach!

I love our chapel for its beauty's sake,
And for a promise on its altar laid—
A promise that I did not need to make,
And have not wish'd unmade.

I love it for that mighty soul who shone—
And shines—the brightest of our gospel's lamps;
And that great heart who pass'd from us, half known,
To watch the embattled camps.

I love it for the coming hope, though dim.
The old renown still hangs about these walls;
And, 'tis my faith, whoever comes, on him
Elijah's mantle falls.

———

MUSIC.

By what fine miracle do linkèd notes
Become this power of exquisite control,
That into waters of elysium floats
The ready-yielding soul?

It will not tell its secret, bids us take
The fact that it is so, and be content.
Like poetry, 'tis not of mortal make;
For both are Heaven-sent.

The notes we deem the music, only are
Themselves the finer instruments; they sheathe
Inexplicable auras from afar,
That through the spirit breathe.

And, as in poesie, who would translate
Immortal harmonies, must give his love
As a religion to his art, and wait
The coming from above.

TEARS.

Whence are these tears that come with sudden start,
In spite of nerve that struggles to restrain?
From overflowing cisterns of the heart?
Or wells within the brain?

That heart-beats have to do with them I know—
Quick beats of joy, slow beats of weary dole:
And, whether out of heart or brain they flow,
Close kin are they with soul.

Fine mists of thought condensed to dewy speech—
Pearls of emotion from their shells set free—
Wavelets that come with treasure to the beach
Of life's mysterious sea:

Naked affections from their Eden driven,
To seek another through this world's unrest—
Embodied spirits from the little heaven
Each keeps in his own breast:

Akin to all that we most sacred hold—
Twin-born with thought, affection, joy, and care—
Twin-born, but how, we never may unfold,
Nor Heaven itself declare.

They are not what they seem. If we despise
The weak creations of our childish years,
A higher wisdom comes to recognise
The sacredness of tears.

JENNY LIND.

When first I heard that world-enrapturing voice,
I marvell'd what could be the secret art
That dwarf'd all others to a sweet, tame noise,
That fail'd to reach the heart.

But when I saw the moisture in her eye,
And the emotion trembling through her frame,
My question had not long to wait reply—
The inward secret came.

She sang with all her being—lived her song—
And not for us alone the strain was given:
It seem'd to pass beyond us and along
The corridors of heaven.

So is it with all excellence: it seeks
Its own complete ideal—great or small;
And, speaking only for itself, it speaks
The heaven-wing'd thought for all.

'Twas not the organic utterance of lips,
The artful government of throat and lung:
The immortal put the mortal in eclipse;
It was the soul that sung.

NATURE'S HARMONIES.

Behold, how perfect the majestic strains
  Sung by the epic thunder! and how sweet,
Even to critic ears, those deft refrains
    The lyric streams repeat!

So, too, with the dramatic seas and winds,
  That flout and woo. Whatever be their part,
Chords of approving harmony it finds
    Within the human heart.

The rustling trees, the pattering rain, the quires
  That pour their melodies from cloud and grove,—
All Nature's poetry—what heart desires
    Its measures to improve?

And even the mechanic arts add voice
  To Nature's minstrelsy: the rushing train
And beating mill-wheel, drive not jarring noise,
    But music, through the brain.

Were Nature's simple resignation ours,
  To let the higher will our wills appease,
Then ours were also those mysterious powers
    That work such harmonies.

Then might I catch the method that would make
  My lines as welcome as the songs of birds,
And, in the reader's faculty, awake
    Thoughts that transcend my words.

THE LIGHT WITHIN THE DARK.

We think of heavenly bliss, and cast our eyes
  Amid yon white curl'd clouds and sun-bright air;
And, lost within the softness of the skies,
  Cry, Surely Heaven is there!

And yet you tell us that yon ambient light
  Is but delusion, that, beyond our bound
Of atmosphere, all is perpetual night,
  Silence and dark profound.

Where shall immortal spirits find their home
  Of light and beauty, if yon azure arc
Be an illusion, and beyond that dome,
  Unfathomable dark?

I close my lids in slumber, and thus make
  My world a dungeon, shorn of the blessed beams:
But soon I cross the bar of sleep, and wake
  Into the light of dreams.

And so there is within the night of space
  An inward day, unseen by mortal eye.
That day to reach, its mysteries to trace,
  We only need to die.

GONE.

Gone in the bloom of youth, the flower of life,
Ere yet his morning hours had wholly shone :
Gone from a world of promises how rife !
With all our bright hopes, gone !

His plans of life all form'd and firmly set,
A plenteous future wooing him to stay,
A sphere in which glad heart and duty met—
And yet, he must away !

Where were thy charms, O Clyde ! to let him go ?
Those charms he loved so much ! thy classic shores ;
Thy lochs that take the ocean's ebb and flow,
And knew his skilful oars :

Thy misty mountains and mysterious Kyles ;
Thy grand sea firth, that in blue beauty floats
Around the weird traditionary isles ;
Thy pleasure-freighted boats.

All could not stay him ! nor the clinging hearts
That lived for him, or for his sake would die :
Nor sleepless watching, nor physician's arts
Restore life's breaking tie.

Thou hast no reason in thy choice, blind Death!
Or reason larger than our thought may gauge—
Thus cutting short the young and useful breath,
Leaving decrepit age!

No reason, Death! Who knows what prompts thy choice
To take the lives that here we least can spare?
What greater need, than in this world of noise,
May claim them otherwhere?

Methinks thy very waywardness betrays
The life beyond. If earth, indeed, were all,
There were more equal measure in our days,
Less marvel in our fall.

And when upon the fever'd couch he lay,
Surely the truth of truths broke on his mind;
Else, why so calmly take the lonesome way,
Nor cast a look behind?

From all the world could give, he turn'd his face;
And pass'd from us—not lost, but only gone:
And this his legacy—*The world's no place*
To rest your hopes upon.

SABBATH.

Like sunrise through my heart the Sabbath breaks,
  Welcome as if a week of night were done :
Even the day before feels like the streaks
    That rise before the sun.

Not mine the Sabbatarian fears that quake
  At week-day levity or week-day load ;
Yet would I to my soul the Sabbath take,
    And give it all to God.

In ways perhaps some creeds would count as sin—
  Breaking the day *they* think they keep so whole—
With little outside ritual, but, within,
    The Sabbath of the soul.

I would begin it while the morning star
  Hangs in the green-blue dawn; when larks take wing,
And throstle-haunted gardens, near and far,
    With warbling matins ring.

Live half a day before the day begins,
  And forth to watch earth out of darkness creep ;
Returning, find the city with its sins
    In folds of burnish'd sleep.

Or give my fresh hours to some master-page ;
The dramatist of every class and clime ;
Or that new-ancient, Massachusett's sage,
Whose thoughts are for all time.

All earth should be God's temple ; but we build
Our little fanes, because they seem to draw
Heaven's beams the more into us, and thus yield
A closer sense of awe.

And so, yon chapel, with its noon-tide rays,
Its music, full free speech, and solemn prayers,
Should have my ripe hours of this day of days,
All free from worldly cares.

And then the home-joys of the slanting day,
The fireside gossip, or the garden walk,
The lounge at sunny doors, and children's play,
Mingled with graver talk.

Or, if day lengthen'd with a lingering wane,
Perhaps 'twould draw me to the whispering wood,
The time-recording shore, the moss-green lane,
Or moorland solitude.

And, far off, I would let the night close in,
Then home through fire-lit hamlets, roads pitch dark,
Catching at times the city's muffled din,
At times the watch-dog's bark.

Passing the wayside cottage, I should hear
The solitary cricket by the fire,
Or night-enchanted ducks make merry cheer,
Low dabbling in the mire.

The drear mysterious voices of the night
Would come into my spirit, there to be
Abiding dreams, and by some after-light
Waked into poesie.

For Nature, the musician, cannot err,
But, through some unpremeditated art,
Her vagrant notes are harmonies that stir
Unknown chords in the heart.

So, with a perfect touch, she blends the hues
Which we in pictures would discordant call:
An alchymy runs through her greens and blues,
And harmonizeth all.

Her sense of form rejects our petty rules,
Despises our proportions, yet retains
That majesty and beauty which our schools
To reach have rack'd their brains.

If thus she greatly teaches eye and ear,
What fine philosophies may she not hint!
And intuitions from her inner sphere
Upon the soul imprint!

Therefore, while in this week-day world I live,
Whatever some theologies may say,
Unto the church of Nature I would give
Much of my Sabbath day.

Nor, from the earliest glimmer in the east,
All up the hours, would I a moment lose,
But fill each full, and draw my Sabbath feast
Out to a thankful close.

JUDGMENTS.

How incomplete our judgments of our friends!
None is himself when seen. The judge still gives
Some shadow of his own, and often lends
The impression he receives.

Each has his own true element, wherein
He is himself, and finds his dearest gain;
Wherein no eye may see him, and, if seen,
Were surely judged insane.

For only tame restraint is deem'd good sense.
Your own idea—be it good or bad—
Rides you rough-shod without the rein, and thence
The verdict—you are mad.

I nowhere feel so much myself, as when
Upon some breezy mountain-side—alone.
If you would judge me, you must know me *then*,
Or hold me yet unknown.

And so with you, I will not say that this,
Or that, is your true character, nor call
Your truer moods to witness, lest I miss
The truest mood of all.

BEAUTY AND RECTITUDE.

'Twould seem there's some affinity between
Beauty and rectitude. We cannot sway
From truth and virtue but it draws a screen
Over the face of day:

The blue sky blurr'd, and earth's refreshing green,
With hill and dale and cattle-haunted fords,
All dead and hollow as the ochred scene
Round the dramatic boards.

The flowers shut up their wonder from our eyes,
Their beauty that enchanted us; and books
Refuse to give the deeper sense that lies
Reveal'd to virtuous looks.

A soul of artless purity discerns
Poetic wreathings in prosaic facts,
And finds that universal Nature turns
To beauty all her acts.

To perfect purity—if such could be—
This earth were all transparent, the dull clod—
In which we neither life nor beauty see—
Breathing the living God.

Beauty of nature through the varied year,
Beauty of truth, of right, of form, of soul—
All beauty is of God—one atmosphere
That permeates the whole.

Let beauty cease to be our daily food,
We lose the finer sense of truth and right:
Forsake the holy paths of rectitude,
And beauty suffers blight.

———

TRUE MARRIAGE.

'Tis not true friendship ours, if there be yet
Secrets between us, but a friendly cheat:
Though, in our frequent greetings, hands be met,
In soul we do not meet.

How much less is it marriage, if one wear
A shadow which the other may not lift!
True marriage gives in joy the mutual share,
In grief the mutual shrift.

True marriage is two persons but one life;
Two brains one mind—the hour-glass and the sand,
No grain of reservation—husband, wife—
One interest, hand in hand.

THE SPIDERS.

Brush not away the spiders! Wherefore carp
  Because they drape the corners of our rooms?
O spare the little weavers and their warp,
    And their mysterious looms!

We search the zones for curious shells and birds,
  We bring aquarium fishes to our homes:
Our little weaver as fine thought affords—
    And of itself it comes.

Who knows what hints in morals and in arts
  Our boasted race have pilfer'd from its threads?
What strength it may have given to stronger hearts?
    Wisdom to wiser heads?

It wove resolves amidst a monarch's cares:
  He conquer'd for his land an honour'd truce;—
And in the book of fame the spider shares
    The glory of the Bruce.

The pretty lawn spread out before its door;
  The little hall o'erlooking the domain;
Its very own, drawn from its silken store,
    Plann'd by its cunning brain!

Not one instinctive and unvaried form,
  But reason'd to the circumstance and place;
With here a stay against the mimic storm,
    And there a strengthening brace.

What patience, ingenuity, and hope!
  Patience to watch, and hope that, soon or late,
Some wingèd prey, bound with its fairy rope,
    Will struggle to its gate.

And can that morsel brain possess indeed
  This forethought, and the reason that consults?
Or does the Parent of all wisdom lead
    It blindly to results?

What plans within that little rounded door
  The exploring eye might find, I'll take on trust;
For should I break the portals to explore,
    'Twould fall to ragged dust.

I have no heart for that—would leave our rooms
  A life-time to the spider's quaint design:
Ah then, how deftly would they ply their looms,
    And what a sight were mine!

THE BUNCH OF LARKS.

Portly he was, in carriage somewhat grand;
Of gentleman he wore the accepted marks:
He thrid the busy street, and in his hand
He bore a bunch of larks!

There be some things that *may* be carried—yes,
A gentleman may carry larks—if dead;
Or any slaughter'd game; not fish, still less
The homely beef or bread.

I met him in the street, and turn'd about,
And mused long after he had flaunted by.
A bunch of larks! and his intent, no doubt,
To have them in a pie.

Yes, four-and-twenty larks baked in a pie!
O, what a feast of melody is there!
The ringing chorus of a summer sky!
A dish of warbling air!

How many dusty wanderers of the earth
Have those still'd voices lifted from the dust!
And now to end their almost Heavenly mirth
Beneath a gourmand's crust!

But as he picks their thin ambrosial throats,
Will no accusing memories arise,
Of grassy glebes, and heaven-descending notes,
And soul-engulfing skies?

"Give me," cries he, "the *substance* of a thing—
Something that I can eat, or drink, or feel—
A poem for the money it will bring—
Larks for the dainty meal."

Well, he may have his substance, and I mine.
Deep in my soul the throbbing lark-notes lie.
My substance lasts, and takes a life divine—
His passes with the pie.

NAMES OF FLOWERS.

As, musing, through the garden walks I go,
  Amidst a blaze of flowers—those sweet earth-flames—
I often feel it is my loss to know
    So little of their names.

I know the lily and I know the rose,
  Lad's-love and wallflower—very little more;
Nothing but what the humble cottage grows
    In plots before the door.

The peppermint that scents the shady nook,
  The honeysuckle tangling round the porch,—
Yes, and the ancient thyme our grandams took
    On Sabbath to the church.

I know the gorse and heather of the moors,
  The blue-bell and the daisy of the leas,
Its purple cousin of the cliffy shores,
    That loves the salt sea-breeze.

But myriad beauties of the garden, and
  Those breathers of the glass-encompass'd air,
I cannot name—can only, gazing, stand,
    As in a thinking prayer.

And yet, 'tis well. If we can name a thing,
We name it, and pass on to what is next;
But, having not this substitute to bring,
Are by the wonder fixt.

When Heaven grows dim, and faith seeks to renew
Its image of our everlasting dower,
I know no argument so sweet as through
The bosom of a flower.

A wicket-gate to Heaven—whereof death
Is the great entrance, closed to mortal eyes—
And, from the little portals, that sweet breath,
The air of paradise!

For surely it is spirit that entreats
Sweet recognition of the spirit, thus;
Something mysteriously divine, that meets
Divinity in us!

Among the garden flowers, bee-like, I glide;
And, though their names to me seal'd letters prove,
They have a speech that never is denied
To hearts that simply—love.

———

ETERNITY FOR ALL.

I read of battles with their thousands slain,
  Of plagues that buried myriads side by side,
Of savage hordes that seem'd to live in vain,
    And, unregretted, died.

And through the histories—sacred and profane—
  What hecatombs of unknown dead I see,—
And marvel if at death they rose again,
    And if all these still *be!*

That Shakspeare lives, we easily believe,—
  The wonder were that such could ever die.
But those unthinking swarms! who can conceive
    How *they* should live, or why?

Why not? If here life's lowly ends they serve,
  May there not be hereafter lowly ends?
The ruder mission for the ruder nerve:
    One makes—one only mends.

Their numbers shake us?—Though the stars had been,
  Like earth, each one the cradle of a race,
And all immortal, there were room within
    The eternal dwelling-place.

For infinite as space, and in its needs
  As various as creation, it demands
All modes of being, intellect, and creeds,
    Outnumbering the sands.

THE QUESTION.

Wherefore this speculation about death,
And whether there be still a life beyond?
If good for us that life outlast the breath,
Then life will be the bond.

For what is good will surely be fulfill'd.
And if beyond this life blank death be best,
Then, also, be our speculation still'd,
And ours an equal rest.

Alas! no rest for doubt-awaken'd mind.
Rest for the lives that batten in the fields:
But man leaves his complacencies behind,
And ever upward builds.

And daily his old truths become untrue.
Life fails him if no further hope he see.
He seeks a higher truth, a larger view,
Intenselier to *be*.

To live, to *live*, is life's great joy—to feel
The living God within—to look abroad,
And, in the beauty that all things reveal,
Still meet the living God.

To close this joy in death were surely loss ;
And thus the question comes, Is death the close ?
We cannot rest in dread, but reach across
The doubts that interpose.

And there we catch the glimpses of a faith,
That throws new light around our mortal strife,
And teaches that the avenue of death
Leads through to fuller life.

This speculative struggle of the soul
May come as exercise to feeble limbs ;
And doubt, that keeps in cloud the unreach'd goal,
Increase the power that climbs.

MUCH LEARNING.

Much learning is but living in the past,
Deserted cobwebs in the wrinkled brow.
Wherefore lament the want of it who hast
The ever-living Now?

They close their doors on us, those learnèd brains;
No entrance ours, without the rusty keys.
Ours are the streets, the mountains, and the plains,
The cloud, the sky, the breeze.

Better yield up the past, and free soul give
Unto the inflow of the passing hour,
And, like the lilies in their glory, live
Our day of sun and shower.

O God, how feeble is our sense of Thee!
The lily trusts Thee, and the lowly beast.
Why beg a crust not ours, when life might be
An ever-ready feast?

Give up the past! We cannot, and be men.
Beasts have the present—circumscribed and small:
But the immortals take within their ken
Past, present, future—all.

THE DRIED-UP FOUNTAIN.

Outside the village, by the public road,
I know a dried-up fountain, overgrown
With herbs, the haunt of legendary toad,
And grass, by Nature sown.

I know not when its trickling life was still'd.
No living ears its babbling tongue has caught.
But often, as I pass, I see it fill'd
And running o'er with thought.

I see it as it was in days of old,
The blue-eyed maiden stooping o'er its brim,
And smoothing in its glass her locks of gold,
Lest she should meet with *him*.

She knows that he is near, yet I can see
Her sweet confusion when she hears him come.
No tryst had they, though every evening he
Carries her pitchers home.

The ancient beggar limps along the road
At thirsty noon, and rests him by its brink;
The dusty pedlar lays aside his load,
And pauses there to drink.

And there the village children come to play,
When busy parents work in shop and field.
The swallows, too, find there the loamy clay
When 'neath the eaves they build.

When cows at eve come crooning home, the boy
Leaves them to drink, while his mechanic skill
Within the brook sets up, with inward joy,
His tiny water-mill.

And when the night is hush'd in summer sleep,
And rest has come to labourer and team,
I hear the runnel through the long grass creep,
As 'twere a whispering dream.

Alas ! 'tis all a dream. Lover and lass,
Children and wanderers, are in their graves ;
And where the fountain flow'd, a greener grass,
Its *In-memoriam*, waves.

GLEN-MESSEN.

As in the babbling crowd where gossips meet,
Some quiet heart maintains itself alone—
Or grass-grown alley off the trampled street—
Glen-Messen lies unknown.

The visitors of summer come and go,
With many a far-famed scene within their ken;
But even their books of travel do not know,
This almost nameless glen.

I got its being and its name from one
Who loves to brood on beauty near at home,
And, haply, garners more, when all is done,
Than those who farther roam.

It was a golden summer day, and Clyde,
From shore to shore, was all one molten flame;
The Holy Loch, still'd with the swollen tide,
Was hallowed as its name.

As up its southern marge I slowly stray'd,
I heard the measured dip of unseen oar,
And even the prattling children as they play'd
Upon the further shore.

Up by the placid loch, which, far beneath,
Bosom'd the summer beauty of the skies,—
I reach'd its upper shores, then took the heath,
For there Glen-messen lies.

Now, where the burn comes swirling from the glen,
A little homestead nestles by a brake,—
And there the yellowhammer and the wren
A desert music make.

An open door invited me within.
The cat purr'd, half asleep, upon the hearth;
A crackling fire kept up a homely din,
The pot a quiet mirth.

The captured fly buzz'd in the spider's weft,
The clock tick'd solemnly against the wall;
The housewife had gone forth, and puss was left
Sole mistress over all.

To this quaint concert I a while gave ear,
Look'd at the vacant stools and chairs; and then,
Exchanging with the cat a brief "good cheer,"
Pass'd slowly up the glen.

The hills shut out the world with all its noise,
Shut in the murmur of the hidden stream;
And only once a hawk, with sudden poise,
Utter'd a sudden scream.

The little glen was all in dreamy hush:
But soon a muffled rumble, soft and deep,
And then the cataract's imperious rush
Awoke it from its sleep.

Adown the glen the burn shot in and out
Beneath the shelving rocks, and where it stay'd
In quiet crystal pools, the speckled trout
In dimpling eddies play'd.

Here, through a rocky sluice the waters bored—
There, round and round in boiling caldron wheel'd;
And up the cataract, like a flashing sword,
The silvery salmon speil'd.

Like a deep thinker, in himself entomb'd,
Stood on a stone the solitary hern;
While all around the purple heather bloom'd,
And waved the feathery fern.

The long, long summer day, in sun and shade,
I linger'd there—but years have gone since then—
And many a pilgrimage in thought I've made,
To wander in the glen.

All Nature finds in man a counterpart:
She takes her spell-bound lover by the hand,
And makes him one with that mysterious heart
That beats through sea and land.

TRUE POSSESSION.

If I can love without possessing, mine
  Becomes the true possession ; for love brings,
Into this self, all that is most divine
    In the beloved things.

That river with its wealth of ships ; these streets
  Of endless property and shifting scene ;
And yon fair landscape, with its princely seats,
    And fields of gold and green :—

Of these, no spar, no stone, no clod I own ;
  But there's the glamour round them, without which
They nothing were but clod, and spar, and stone,—
    And *that* I freely reach.

The dearest having of a prosperous man
  Might be his neighbour's, yet he not resign :
For this our equal birthright—Take who can ;
    All earth *love* —and 'tis thine.

THE OLD YEAR.

Good-bye, old year, good-bye! now would I learn
The new one's name, but yours jumps to my pen,
As, like a parting friend, you turn and turn
To shake my hand again.

What promise made! how little done, old year!
But 'tis God's way, and we are wisely mute.
The blossom'd Spring gives hope of endless cheer;
But Winter counts the fruit.

And so, our hopes are blown to outward loss:
Yet, inwardly, the gain, who knows how great!
For, like the blighted hope on Calvary's cross,
They grow, would we but wait.

Good-bye, old year! though now you largely stand,
With all your living memories in store,
Soon will you lie, an unknown grain of sand,
On Time's eternal shore.

And with my farewell I could give a tear,
If man's own end were only death and dross:
But, with eternity around us here,
Lost time can be no loss.

Yet, mourn its waste—for that is waste of soul;
And make each blighted hope a chastening rod:
Then, though the years inexorably roll,
They bring us nearer God.

SONNETS.

PRELUDE TO A FIRST EDITION.

Thou canst not hide thyself behind thy work;
It puts thee in the front, so that man's eye,
Looking on it, sees thee. Truth will not lurk
Unseen in fair false words: thou canst not lie.
Therefore I say no word about my *Rhymes*,
But give them as they came—the latest last—
That he who deigns to listen to their chimes,
May tell how wears the heart from which they pass'd.
O reader, if thou hear one heavenward peal
Amid the clang that is but earthly noise,
And if the echo from thy breast reveal
A kindred note, then will my heart rejoice.
I shall exult if thy approving look,
Bespeak a soul within my little book.

TO A LIGHTHOUSE AT NIGHT,

SEEN FROM THE SEA.

Spirit of Caledonia's rocky coast!
Thy pale beam, glimmering like a star of night,
Looks o'er the sea a while: anon 'tis lost;
Then comes forth in a blaze of purest light,
Like a lost soul redeem'd: again it wanes:
But soon a blood-flame gleams upon the sight,
Like a thrall'd warrior bursting from his chains,
Stunning the world with wonder of his might.—
Bright beacon lamp! thou may'st be liken'd to
The Book of God—the beacon-light of Heaven:
Thou appear'st in different shades, yet all are true;
The Heavenly light is like thee in this, even:
Your ends are one—a blessed end! for both
Are lamps to light the nighted pilgrim's path.

TWENTY-ONE.

And can it be that I am *twenty-one !*
Well, I will not believe it, for I feel
As if I were a boy : I cannot deal
In things that stir the world, nor yet with man
Can I hold man-like converse : the whole plan,
Structure, and working of my mind reveal,
That, like a floating thing caught in a *wiel,*
I've lagg'd behind while Time's stream onward ran.
Swift Time ! O I shall ne'er o'ertake thy speed !
Well, well, run on ; thy reckonings I'll blot
From off my memory's page ; my life-time's meed
I'll measure by the growing of my thought ;
And ever when I do a goodly deed,
I'll mark *that* as an era in my lot.

WRITTEN ON MAY MORNING.

O wherefore should I write, when these my lines
May ne'er be read—if read, forgotten quite?
Wherefore the earth encumber with dead signs,
That to the generations give no light?
Hark! from yon sunny cloudlet comes the note
Of one that carols not for me or you,
But that the Spirit of creation floats
Into his breast, and gushes out anew.
Green earth! sweet air! blue sky! what worshipper
Can hold his voice on this all-beauteous day?
Young May is in the meadow playing her,
And all the world a-wooing is young May.
She doth bewitch her lovers; whoso yields
Unto her spell, straight "babbles of green fields."

AFTER A THUNDERSTORM.

The dun clouds quiver'd and half gleam'd, as if
Red flame behind them flicker'd: from their wombs
The lightnings shot to life, and instant tombs
In earth's green breast: then rattled, sharp and brief,
The musketry of heaven; and a boom
Went through the hills, and broke their slumber deep,—
They lay like giants, muttering in sleep.
At last methought it was the crack of doom!
Both fire and flood seem'd battling which should have
Our sweet green earth; and she, all meekness, turn'd
Her fair cheek to them. They, too fiercely brave,
Wasted their fruitless strength, and pass'd away;
And earth, the patient and forbearing, earn'd
A triumph which Resistance never may.

RELIEF IN POETRY.

Whether my sonnet be of grief or joy,
It ever is preceded by depression—
A heaviness, like guilt before confession,
Which only in revealment finds alloy.
So, when the sweets of earth begin to cloy,
And all the world seems barr'd to my progression,
I know my soul has in it a possession
Which *will* be out, or cease not to annoy.
And yet I know not what this is, or whence!
Cloud-like it comes, but not like cloud disperses:
It comes uncall'd, nor will be driven hence,
And, left unto itself, it runs to verses.
If in this sonnet I have found relief,
Then has it done good work, though poor and brief.

THE DRUNKARD'S SONNET.

List, friend, and I will tell you what I am,
Since to deep draughts I have myself given o'er.
My coat, you see, is bare, and a sad qualm
Gripes in my purse and makes it retch full sore:
This eye, that once was pure as any star,
Is now a half-burnt coal; and this same face
That has no meaning in't, whose features are
Expression's grave, once mirror'd every grace:
The God-breathed soul that with a Heavenly light
Illumed this frame, is sear'd and scorch'd away:
All mind, all feeling, all impulsive might
Have stolen like vapour from this senseless clay.
Is not that all our Heaven that hath me left?
Is not this Hell—to *know* I am bereft?

GOD'S DIMNESS.

O God, how dim Thou growest to the sight!
Our faith in Thee doth ever need renewal,
As doth a fire its due supply of fuel—
For both, without, will soon cease to be bright.
And we might deem Thee but a mist o' the brain,
That fadeth in the sunlight of our reason;
But well I know the fault is in our vision,
Which, having had Thee, loseth Thee again.—
Our world is full of film, of motes our air;
To keep the vision clear is hard indeed;
Yet they who would see truly, only need
Be free from these—then look, and God is there.
A clear eye cannot keep from seeing Him:
When He's unseen, let's know our eyes are dim.

UNLOSABLE FRIENDS.

You little know the man to whom you write—
Still less the nature of his friends. He looks
Around these shelves, and, from immortal books,
Whole hosts of choicest friends crowd on his sight.
These ever have been his : your puny might
Can not displace one friend ; nor any deed
Of his, though jarring with your peevish creed,
E'er lose him one : his strength is *conscious* right.
He has, besides, a visionary ken,
That holds a world of friends. On hearts of men
He has not built a hope of any height :
Withdraw them, and there is no ruin wrought.
Therefore you've used an unprophetic pen ;
Your words are weak ; he blasts them with a thought.

NEAR DUNBAR.

Here Cromwell stood, that dark and frowning night,
Hemm'd in upon this desperate tongue of land,
The sea behind, the sea on either hand,
And, fronting him, the foe on yonder height.
What chance for Cromwell in to-morrow's fight,
If thus the order of the battle stand !
He was but captain, the supreme command
He knew was His who, to the most lorn right,
Oft gives mysterious victory. And so,
Arm'd with this faith, of fear he never dream'd.
For ever with that man a Power there seem'd,
That conquer'd first the judgment of his foe,
Then gave an easy field. So would it be
With all who own'd as deep a trust as he.

PATRIOT AND POET.

1864.

O, cold and languid blood! I took no part
In that great welcome; made a distant stand
Behind the crowd that rush'd to grasp the hand:
I raised no shout to greet the patriot heart.—
And so again, when other pulses start—
Touch'd with the magic of the poet's wand—
I let the tumult run from strand to strand,
And only read his line, adore his art.—
Yet I a thousand times have thank'd my star,
That I have known this year of Sixty-four,
And live to see that Nature's nobles are
Now honour'd as they never were before:
The year that rang when Garibaldi came;
That sought to gild even Shakspeare's golden name.

TO THE REV. HUGH STOWELL BROWN.

"What does it matter what I think? I do not think it matters to any one on this side of the Atlantic, or on the other side."—*Vide his speech in the Amphitheatre.*

No matter what you think? Great matter, Brown!
The lowliest man by casting in his thought
Works *some* change in the universal lot,—
And your own thoughts have leaven'd half the town.
From single thoughts our liberties come down.
A nation's throes are shared, her fields half fought
By what free nations think of them. Deem not
All impotent the inward cheer or frown:
For, like the electric flash, men's thoughts go forth,
Powers to their brother men, though seas apart.
Freeman! in yonder West thy thought is worth
A strong right arm. Give it, whoe'er thou art.
Who knows how much the weakness of the North
Is due to free old England's lagging heart!

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

"*Sic semper tyrannis!*" the assassin cried,
As Lincoln fell. O villain! who than he
More lived to set both slave and tyrant free!
Or so enrapt with plans of freedom died,
That even thy treacherous deed shall glance aside,
And do the dead man's will by land and sea,
Win bloodless battles, and make that to be
Which to his living mandate was denied!
Peace to that gentle heart! the peace he sought
For all mankind, nor for it dies in vain.
Rest to the uncrown'd king! who, toiling, brought
His bleeding country through that dreadful reign;
Who, living, earn'd a world's revering thought,
And, dying, leaves his name without a stain.

RETROSPECTION.

When, after five brief years, I read again
The little book I ventured on the age,
Humbled I meet along the straggling page
The weak and limping children of my pen.
And these are they I deem'd so perfect *then!*
Scarce one my disappointment to assuage!—
'Tis well: their imperfection stands a gauge
That tells me I have deepen'd in my ken.—
There's little more comes to us when we seek
To make our old work a perpetual bay.
O, rather, feel our yesterdays were weak,
E'en though we cannot better them to-day.
From work outgrown a higher thought we borrow:
And thought to-day will be a deed to-morrow.

TO MY BELOVED.

Nought can destroy thy love ! it clings to me,
'Midst my neglect and infidelity.
I've used no art to live in thy mind's heaven—
Have been unkind—yet thou hast ever striven
To be my comforter and guiding star.
I've follow'd vanities, and banish'd far
All thought of thee ; and yet thy love's clear eye
Would bide upon me, seeming to defy
All earth to make me worthless in thy sight.
O thou, the very moon of my dark night !
I've been most faithless to thee—yet, for all,
Thou art my lodestone—wilt not let me fall
From thy love's circle. Ah, what mystery
Can bind thy love to one who is to thee
So great a prodigal ? O love most pure,
Whose heat amid such coldness can endure !
Not for the barter of my love thou givest
Thy soul's affection, but myself thou lovest,—
Dreaming there is in me that which is not,
Or which thy fine eyes see beneath the blot
That hides me from myself. If there be aught
In me that's worthy of thy love, 'tis that
Rich, most rich gift—*To know thy goodliness.*
O—if not lost—I am but saved by this.
In my worst hours, thy worth shows to me most ;

It comes like moonlight on the wrecking coast,
Illumining the blindness of the skies,
And showing heaven where earth's trouble lies.—
Yet, though thy rays seem to my motey eyes
More beautiful, when thus they darkly find me,
I'd have thee *always*, though thy light should blind me!
For now I see thou art my only treasure:
In having thee, I have the heap'd-up measure
Of all earth's glory—since there is in thee
That which turns gold to dust, and makes it flee
Like breath away; the having of broad fields,
To that of the bare rock, which nothing yields;
The pride of riches and the pomp of ruling,
To blind insanity and idle fooling.—
And what a precious jewel, then, thou art,
That with thy touch canst purify the heart
From all these idols! O, thou cloudy brain,
Make thy thick atmosphere dissolve in rain,
And leave a heaven where this orb may shine
In constant lustre, and be ever mine!

And who, and what art thou, most excellent thing,
Whose names of *love*, *orb*, *jewel*, *treasure*, ring
Confusedly throughout my careless verse;
Whose virtues still I harp on and rehearse—
Setting as worthless to thy worth, all things,
From smallest havings to the crowns of kings?
Art thou the fair maid of a lover's vision—
To him all peerless; in the world's decision
But one of many? Nay! I cannot speak

Of thy hair's twining ; or of thy soft cheek ;
Or of the sea of love in thy deep eye ;
Or of the inflaming music of thy sigh.
Wert thou a woman, these might be my theme ;
They are seldom absent from the lover's dream.
But woman thou art none—unless in spirit ;
For all her heavenliness thou dost inherit,
Wanting her earth. Yet, only those beloved
By thee can see thy beauty, or be moved
By thy fine excellence ; and *they* will know
The mystery of my speaking ; *them* I show
What is most clear, although it seems to break
In struggles through me, labouring to take
A form unto the sight. And these harsh words
But *hint* their message ; yet that hint affords,
To those who are thy chosen, the full sense
Of that thou speak'st through me : this diffidence,
To them who know thy hints, is eloquence.
It is thy way of telling : in the woods,
The meadows, and the hilly solitudes,
Thou speakest thus, and choosest for thy voice,
The little throats that raise the piping noise
Which rings on summer days among green trees ;
The coy leaves that with the frolicsome breeze
Hold courtship i' the forest, or to themselves
Tell whispering tales of fairy-land, and elves
That haunt their own wood in its dreamy places ;
The joyous stream that through the meadow chases
Its own thought, like a child ; the voice that comes
To his ear among the hills, when the poet roams,

Wrapp'd up in visions. Many a tongue beside,
Thou tak'st from Nature; but all mystified
They come to us—most musical in tone,
But dim in meaning, save to those alone
Who are thy gifted; *their* fine ear receives
The meaning which thy voice in mystery gives.

And to this mystery thou wouldst tune my ear:
But I am faithless to thee, and I fear
The World has too much of me to be thine
So wholly as to understand thy sign,
In its most secret meaning. Can I not
Shake off the earth that clogs my every thought
And be all thine, who, with untiring love,
Wouldst one so very false and changeful have?

I would thee wed, and yet the World's I'd be;
But whoso weds the World can not wed thee!
Besides, *two* wives in one house cannot sit;
Then must I be the changeful *lover* yet—
Courting a while the lewd smiles of the World,
Till, sick at heart and weary, I am hurl'd
From her false arms to seek relief in thee,
My ever sweet and faithful POESIE.

THE LONE SOUL.

O if in this wide world there be no one
Whom thou, lone soul, may'st heap thy love upon,
What art thou then to do, since nought but this
Can ever bring thee into deeps of bliss?
There is no true bliss save in lavishing
Thy whole affection on some only thing:
For if love be divided it may die.
But thou, lone one, hast no such thing! no eye
Hangs on thee like a planet, drawing thee
Into the self-abandoned ecstasy
Of adoration! nor a love-toned voice
Makes to thine ear all other music noise,
Shaming the fabled hymning of the spheres—
A voice whereon thou'dst dwell until thine ears
Forgot the knowing of all other sound.
No hand's soft pressure makes thy pulses bound
Into a trance of feeling so refined
That even thy very flesh becomes a mind,
And thou hast lost thy being in another.—
Ah, hadst thou one combining these together,
Then might'st thou live the bliss, the want of which
Keeps thee the lonely soul.

But why not teach
Thyself to live as other mortals do?

And eat and drink and sleep thy earth's hour through ;
Fall in with the World's own humour, jest and rail,
Slander thy neighbour, laugh at the merry tale ;
Believe in the supremacy of wealth ;
Bow down before nobility ; thy health
Leave to the doctor ; let the parson keep
Thy soul ; and, trusting him, let Question sleep.

Into the World's wheel thou canst never fall,
But hover'st on its rim, like the erring ball
That ever cometh in at the wrong place,
And is spun off again. The World's full race
Seems not to want thee. Like a sinful ghost,
No grave will have thee : yet methinks thou know'st
Full well the reason ; ha ! thou'lt have no grave !
Into the World's mad chase thou wilt not crave
To get admission—even glorying
In thy exclusion, nourishing the sting
Which seems to breed thy pain, but which, indeed,
Is surely thy great joy,—else wherefore need
All these thy wand'rings into places lone,
Wherein thou seem'st to breathe an air unknown
To us inside the World—a frenzied air
Which, creeping in thy brain, makes music there,
Sweeter and softer than the fairies make
At noon, when sunshine sleeps in their green brake ;
An air through which all visible nature seems
Fairer than that which poets see in dreams ?—
It cannot be but thou art glorified
In these thy solitudes : the fenny side

Of some lone river, winding among sedge,
Where weary sea-birds, sitting on the edge,
Clamour the shrill air with their old-world cry,
And thou art strangely sad, yet know'st not why :
The hill-embosom'd glen, so dusk and deep,
Where, over shelving rocks, the waters leap
And fret themselves to foam, which sends a shower
Of pearls throughout the glen, o'er leaf and flower,
And all is in a spangling maze of dew :
The mountain ridge that looms so sharp and blue,
Where rugged clouds, like giants, stalk about,
In silence, like all power, yet working out
Thunders and winds that shake the ponderous globe :
The hearkening wood, made twilight with its robe
Of slumbering leaves, wherein the slightest sound
Leaps to thy startled heart, and the hollow ground
Reveals its secrets to thy wakening tread—
Dim hints of fairy-land ; whilst overhead
Thou look'st into a shady sycamore,
And seest a little heaven in its core ;—
The freshness of green leaves, the sunbeam's glory,
The unseen insects, humming their unknown story,
Sink deep into thy soul ;—sweet little heaven,
He never can to nothingness be driven,
Can ne'er be wanting of a fair earth-dower,
Whose soul can live in thee one summer-hour.

But, 'tis not only when the lustry day
Wons in the woods that thou art tempted to stray
Out of our ken into these solitudes,

But also when black night comes down and broods
Over the morrow's birth. Then wilt thou trace
Thy moody way into some shuddering place
Where only ghosts would enter. Ah, sad soul!
The city joins in revelry; the bowl
Steams through our blood and brains; from lighted halls
Gush out whole floods of music; and stone walls
Are rent with song and mirth! Thou might'st be here,
Yet art in darkness, taking into thine ear
The hum of all this gladness; fondly deeming
That all our joy is but a shallow seeming,
And that thy bosom holds a deeper mirth—
Ours ever dying, thine a constant birth—
Ours still a losing that which we have found,
But thine a gaining that which hath no bound—
Ours coming to stops at morn, and noon, and even,
Thine the expanding circle of blue heaven!—
And truly there is no continuance
In our life's joy! it comes as if by chance:
It will not be impressed, but shuns our seeking.
The chain of earthly love is ever breaking;
And most dear friends are dearest when apart:
Thy presence, friend, is lead upon my heart:
Indeed, I love thee; yet, I know not how,
I'd love thee better, if thou'dst leave me now!

Nothing that hath not all the soul is lasting,
But ever runs to weariness and wasting:
And all the soul can nothing earthly have—
Unless perchance a virtuous woman's love,

Or the passion that to poesie gives birth ;—
But when *these* have the soul, earth is not earth ;
And therefore of high Heaven 'tis thought they are—
Kindred in beauty to the morning-star,
Whose rising so enwraps our adoration,
And brings o'er weary hearts a new creation.

But thou, lone one, hast no good woman's love,
Nor that fine power which draweth from above
The air in which the poet hath his breathing.
Yet in thy brain there seems a constant seething
Of spirit-element, and in thy breast
A joy, not quick and light, but all comprest
Deep and devouring as a mother's eye
Hung o'er her sleeping child, and no one by.

We thought thee sad : that thought was form'd too soon !
Yet thou art lonely as the waning moon,
That creeps with weary step and trembling horn,
Athwart our windows, 'tween the night and morn.
And yet thou art not all alone ; me-seems
Thou art like him who walketh in his dreams
And seeth some one that we cannot see,—
For though stone-blind to all we can, yet he
Is with mysterious presences. The skies
Are quick with throbbing life, though our weak eyes
See only voids of blue. To stronger gaze,
The voids reveal a presence more than haze.

And is it, then, this strong far-reaching sense
That, shunning our littleness, withdraws thee hence,
Out of the human World, to brood apart
Upon the muffled beating of that Heart
Which moves the spheres, and which thou deem'st
is heard
Only in places from the World retired?—
Thy deeming is but dreaming! know thou this:
Thy God—man's God—shuns not our littleness.
Hark! 'tis but music and gay tread of feet:
Yet listen! Hear'st thou not that solemn beat
Amidst it all?—the same which fills thine ear
In solitude—there terrifying—here,
Choir'd in humanities and homely things,
From which it takes those plaintive murmurings,
Almost too fine for human souls to note:
Yet thou, with thy fine ear, might'st hear them float
Where we are all unconscious. Come thou in
From thy lone deserts, and fear not the sin
That so envelops us: thou'lt gain that part
Of man which thou most need'st—a human heart.
(And if God chiefly moves in any place,
It is the human heart.) O wherefore chase
Thy vision into solitude? A light
Is in us and about us day and night:
It is not of, but that which lights, the sun;
And clear eyes see it streaming from each one.

The beating of that Heart which moves the
spheres,

And which thy fine ear in the desert hears,
It stronger *here;* and that mysterious Light
Which draws thy searching eyes beyond our sight,
Is with us, even as the air ; and, thus,
What thou art seeking most, is most with us.
Come, then, amongst us, and thou may'st be moved
To love us, and, thus loving, be belov'd :
For all this life is flat, and nothing worth,
Till lapp'd in love, as sunlight laps the earth.

THE DAWS.

Awake thee, awake ! kirk-bells give warning—
Rise and enjoy the Sabbath morning !

The Sabbath is a day to drowse,
And sleep will stand me another turning.

But hearken ! the *Daws* fly over the town,
Some clear, sharp, airy notes come down ;
And they switch away, with arouse ! arouse !
Come and enjoy the Sabbath morning.

Soon, soon in the open street I stand :
God's silence lies o'er all the land—
Silence and beauty everywhere—
In those unfathomable skies,
And in the city as it lies
In folds of soft and sunny air.

The morn has lit the golden vanes,
The sun burns in the eastern panes,
The smoke of newly-kindled fires
Hangs blue about the gleaming spires.
The city's roar is hush'd, the humming
Country to the city coming.
A mild low bleat runs through the street

From some far-off upland farm;
The cottar's cow lows in the croft,
Our dingy lanes repeat the charm.

Sweetly on Sabbath morning speak
Things unheard through all the week :—
The swallows, chittering on the eave
A fluttering ditty e'er they leave
In ecstasy, the air to cleave;
The house-top sparrows in the street,
Chirping among passing feet;
Unfelt winds singing in the tree
Almost imagined melody:
The gray-fly buzzing on the wall,—
And many voices, sweet and small;—
But the *Daws* are lords of all.

Where the morning smoke is curling,
And becoming viewless air,
See the merry black-coats whirling—
What a heaven of joy is there!
Not a single drop of care!

Cawing o'er the blacken'd tower,
Cawing round the gleaming spire;
I have watch'd them many an hour,
And my heart would never tire
A-list'ning that discordant quire :—
Discordant! No; the rudest note,
The simplest strain from Nature's throat,

Has its own chord, all full and clear,
Deep within the spirit's ear.

Ah, whither wouldst thou, fervid spirit,
Panting through thy day of strife?
The universe thou dost inherit,
And eternal life.
The very winds, the skies that shine
In glory yonder, all are thine;
Thine by that mysterious law
That strikes a chord almost divine
Between thee and the worthless Daw.

Chased by the phantoms, Ambition and Death,
Slacken thy pace and take thy breath;
Tarry, and let them go by;
And know, for as much as they seem to claim,
Ambition will surely miss his aim,
And Death as surely die.

Unbend thy brow from thoughts of pelf;
It is a dream, and abides no waking:
Thy greatest treasures are thyself,
And Beauty and Truth, that wait thy taking.—
For, after all the toil and pain,
And coffers fill'd, where is the gain?
The beauty of my lord's domain
Makes me its lord. The city lying
In a golden lair of morning air,
With those black wings above it flying,

Is trulier mine than his that draws
The rents, but does not know the Daws.

Cast off all fears of a dismal day
When Death shall reduce thee to senseless clay.
The earth can only take its own,
And death is but a sculptured stone.
But man is link'd, by living thought,
With God and the great eternities;
He is unending as the skies,
And needs not fear for aught.

Then what need'st thou but largely live
All thoughts and things that from the Giver
Issue through the great For-ever?
O, there is time to work and pause—
Good time for all, yea, even to give
A Sabbath morning to the Daws.

"WHAT PLACE IS THIS?"

These words came from the sleeper whilst a dream
  Moved o'er her face, like sunshine o'er a plain.
Her marble features bore a sudden gleam,
  And settled into marbleness again :
Again, again lit up in gleams of bliss,
And seem'd in thought to ask, "What place is this?"

What place is this ! O, sleeper, thou art here,
  Within the poor walls of thy simple home ;—
Thou ! thou ! what thou? the mind? Yea, it is near—
  Else, how the thoughts that o'er thy features come?
I see them arch thine eyebrows, curve thy lips :
Thy soul is there behind : sleep's an eclipse.

Thy mind, thy all, is here ; then wherefore ask
  What place is this, when thou thyself canst tell?
Does sleep make false or true, mask or unmask
  The things that, waking, thou wouldst know so well?
This finite side is dark ; eclipsing sleep
Takes it, but gives thee all the infinite deep.

Thine the Unseen that lies behind our Seen,
  And all thy storied past is in thy Now :
The waking memory pictures what has been,—
  But falsely, shadowyly to that which thou

Art seeing now. The Been can never die!
It wakes in sleep—sleeps in the memory.

If waking sense receives it as ideal,
And holds a dream as that which only seems,
It is because we cannot get the real,
But only twilight-glimpses, of our dreams.
In dreams and day we doubt not—on their rim
The things of dreams and day seem false and dim.

We may not know a dream but *in* a dream;
And when awake we know not what we knew.
The shreds that skirt our waking, we can deem
Nought but distorted shadows of the true.
It will not be brought *out* of sleep: we may
As well take *into* sleep the waking day.

Day-truths grow jumbled on the edge of sleep,
And dance in motley to the closing eye:
In vain we strive their sequences to keep;
But do we therefore hold day's truth a lie?
'Tween sleep and waking there's a belt of night
We darkly cross, and come again to light.

What place it is, or whom thou speakest to,
Sleeper, I may not guess; I can but trace
The lines of light that dimly flicker through
The dusky veil, and know there *is* a place.
O, sleeper, thou art there! Within the Seen
There is a world the outward does but screen.

The Unseen bears the Seen up, like a bell,
Of rainbow-hues, that floats upon the river;
And could it be withdrawn, ah, then, farewell
The things we dote on now! We are for ever—
We and the world we cling to—all and we—
Resting on that we scarce believe to be.

We live outside the temple, looking in
Through trances of deep thought—half entering when
Sleep takes us from the world's restraining din.
But thought grows dim, and sleep brings back again.
O, not until Death open the great door,
Can we find entrance that leads back no more.

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TIME STEALS AWAY.

Time steals away
Like nightly thief; we dream not of his going.
O blind and deaf! by day
We see him not—night, hear him not—unknowing
The beggars we are made—our dear life ta'en—
The treasure that we never can regain.

Stop, slippery thing!
Ah no—'tis gone! it neither stops nor lingers;
And vain is following.
I grasp'd it as it pass'd, but through my fingers,
Eel-like, it slipt. I thought 'twas mine for using,
Yet, in that thought, still was the treasure losing.

Lost day! lost hour!
Wherein our strength, our breath, our life were wasted:
Had we in them gain'd power
Of soul, or of the Unending Mystery tasted,
They were not lost; for upward thus to tend,
And grow to God, is surely our great end.

Time steals away
From earth-encumber'd minds, which cannot hold it;
And sloth and empty play
Hang on our life, like garments, and enfold it.

E'en *this* hour is not mine ; for see ! 'tis gone,
Full of regrets for that already flown.

Why mourn lost time?
The immortal spirit knows no calendar !
And in the invisible clime
No dial tells of the fleeting messenger.
The earth alone is mark'd with shade and night ;
Beyond its bourn, all, all is day and light.

Fleet, fleet away,
Days, months, and years, until ye have no meaning,
But are lost in endless day ;
When light and glory, whereof we have no weening,
Shall burst upon the disencumber'd mind,
Which shall see things with an eye that now is blind.

TO MY UNCLE.

My uncle! hallowed name, revered, belov'd!
I cannot breathe it but, within my breast,
A speechless awe arises,—I am moved
With veneration deep—like one possess'd
With some high heavenly thought that is too great
For mind to grasp in this its earthly state.

O, uncle, I have learn'd to think of thee,
Not as of other men, but as I'd think
Of something holier than man could be;
And I can image thee a middle link
Of that great chain of intellect—the chain
That we may fancy earth with heaven to join.

Thy home seems not to be with man on earth;
Thou lovest not to mingle in earth's strife;
Thou carest little for its idle mirth—
Thy heart all given to another life.
No earthly thought thou seemest to inherit;
Thou seemest but to live in mind—in spirit.

Now age is creeping on thee, cold and drear;
Thou'rt but the meagre shadow of thy prime:
And, like shore-eating waves, each ruthless year
Marks in thy form the ravages of time.

Thy tottering steps, thy feeble, lessening frame,
Presagers are of life's decaying flame.

And, uncle, I could wish that thou hadst been
More snugly in the lap of comfort placed;
For thou art lone, and Poverty, I ween,
Too closely in her arms hath thee embraced.
Would thy estate were otherwise, or mine
Were rich as my desire to better thine!

Still, thou art blest! for though in body thou
Hast little freedom on this mortal ball;
Though 'neath infirmities thou'rt forced to bow,
Thy *mind* is free, nor can be kept in thrall.
Freedom of body may be got for gold;
But the mind's freedom is not bought and sold.

But, uncle, why should I thus speak of thee?
Thou knowest all and more than I can say:
And in these lines thou'lt many an error see;
But thou wilt check me where I've gone astray.
O, I have need of thee to guide me on,
For hitherto I've groped my way alone.

Had some instructor kindly gone before,
And shown me where best knowledge could be found,
I might, ere now, have had a goodly store
Of wisdom's wealth, of truths, deep and profound.
The little that I know, I've learned by chance—
The weeds of learning, cull'd in ignorance.

O, uncle! thou who art so dear a friend,
  May I not look to thee as to a father?
And mayst not thou my wavering footsteps tend,
  Pointing to where thy wisdom thou didst gather?
Nor would thy pains be wasted on me, even
Though but one step thou led'st me nearer Heaven.

THE GUILTY SOUL.

You bid me to the green meads go,
Where the crystal waters wind;
In them you say there is a charm
That heals the troubled mind.
You say the music of the woods
Might while away my care :—
Ah no! the guilty soul
Can find no comfort there.

I've wander'd in yon meadow green,
I've sat beside its spring;
But my dreary mind grew drearier
To hear its murmuring.
I've bared my fever'd brow to feel
The meadow's cooling air :—
But no! the guilty soul
Could find no comfort there!

I've listen'd to the wild-bird's voice,
Far in yon hollow wood;
But a fearfulness came over me
In the deep solitude:
Methought a scornful whispering
Came to my startled ear :—
Ah no! the guilty soul
Could find no comfort there!

I have no soul for scenes like these :
They are too pure for me,
And my polluted heart can not
Drink in their purity :
Their beauty only makes me feel
How black my vices were :—
Ah no ! the guilty soul
Can find no comfort there !

O leave me to myself, my friend,
Look not upon my pain !
The burning tears of penitence
Are starting in my brain.
There is a balm in penitence—
A comfort for all care ;
And O ! the guilty soul
Can find it only there !

MAN IS A VAPOUR.

A cloudlet rose from earth's swampy wells,
  Hovering like a living thing;
But the air crept into its pory cells,
Severing it into particles,
  Plucking its downy wing;
Till it faded from the gazer's sight,
    Ne'er to unite.

Man is a vapour, by life's ray
  Drawn into light. But through his frame
Creeps Death with chemical decay;
His filmy substance shrinks away—
  Going to whence it came—
Through earth and air, the wide world o'er,
    To meet no more.

Is this the finish of our days?
  Is there no life in our lost breath?
Has Mind, when set on earth, no rays,
Elsewhere? A voice within us says,
  "Thy answerer is Death."
If Death can tell us this,—O why
    Would we not die!

TO SLEEP.

O Sleep! would that thou'dst seek my lonesome bed;
Night deepens, I am wearied watching now;
For I have vainly wooed thee till my brow
Is in a fever'd flame, and aching head
Feels as the downy pillow were a stone.
Go leave me, Thought, that Sleep may fill thy stead—
I fain would wile her from her starry throne—
Come, Sleep!

Fair Sleep! mind-soothing, soul-bewitching Sleep!
Come, fair enchantress, I would with thee speak—
O come, and fan this fever from my cheek:
I now with Thought no more communion keep;
Be not afraid, fair spirit, to alight;
Thy breath will soothe me into slumbers deep;
Myweary brain hath need of them to-night—
Come, Sleep!

Sweet Sleep! thou'rt sweeter than the breath of May;
Her dew is not so sweet as thou, nor are
The moorland zephyrs, coming from afar,
Sucking the breath of wildflowers by the way.
Thou art so pure we cannot see thy form;

And thou art softer than the moonlight-ray :
Thou gladd'st the soul, as Cynthia doth a storm—
Come, Sleep !

Loved Sleep ! methinks I feel thee o'er me hover,
Thy seraph wings expanding to descend :
They fan me now, their balmy wavings blend
Along my brow ; strange elf-light things come over
My fancied sight : now thought's unmeaning train
Runs through my mind ; and, like a spell-bound lover,
I am enslaved with a bewitching chain—
Loved Sleep !

Deep Sleep ! now thou art sitting on my breast ;
Mine eyes thou'st seal'd with kisses sweet, and they
Have stolen my very senses all away.
No more my brain, with aching thought oppress'd,
Beats sore ; for now alike to bliss or woe
'Tis dead : thou'st stretch'd my frame in death-like rest—
I know not that I am, thou'st changed me so—
Deep Sleep !

* * * * * * * *

Strange Sleep ! thy first, fond, warm embrace is o'er,
And thou art but a flimsy tissue now :
Thou'rt flitting o'er my breast and round my brow—
A fairy thing ! And, like the sounding shore,
Afar, far off, a noise comes in my ear :

I sleep, and yet I know it ; and the lore
That haunts my brain, seems truth—and yet, how
queer !
Strange Sleep !

Go, Sleep—sweet thing ! I pray thee go away :
A faint light streaks my eyelids and they ope' ;
I look far o'er the ocean's endless scope—
A red rim hems my view—and lo ! 'tis day.
Small sleep sufficeth youth, so pray thee go !
My limbs feel strength renew'd, and morning's ray
Sheds o'er my heart a light and lively glow—
Go, Sleep !

Kind Sleep ! thanks for thy much loved companie,
Thou sweet, soft-soothing, wonder-working thing !
For thou dost bear me 'neath thy downy wing
To youth's dear home, afar in yon countrie,
Where love and friendship live, and fireside bliss :
And many a joy I taste ere thou dost bring
Me back again o'er the blue sea's abyss—
Kind Sleep !

Just Sleep ! thou art the poor man's dearest friend :
Wealth cannot buy thee ; and the wealthy man,
Restive with rest, is sleepless oft, and wan ;
But labouring Poverty thou aye dost tend :
And thou o'er virtuous hearts kind watch dost keep ;

Thou dost o'er slander'd Innocence descend,
But shunn'st its slanderers—truth-loving Sleep—
Just Sleep!

Spirit Sleep! were I to hear Philosophy
Tell what thou art, I would not list the tale;
For thou might'st be a thing of earth—too frail
The object of our airy thoughts to be.
I'll heed not what thou art in Science deep,
But take thee as thou art in Poesie—
Thou darling of the fancy—dreamy Sleep!
Spirit Sleep!

AT THE GRAVE OF MARGARET.

The waning moon weeps o'er thy grave, dear Margaret ;
Night's dewy tears hang on the bending grass.
O let me weep my sorrows o'er it too,
Though from each grave there come a vapoury ghost,
To pity my unfledged soul that cannot rise
To where in beauty thou, with the free, art soaring !—
O, I will worship thee with tears ! with tears
I'll ever speak of thee ; for only they
Can tell our thoughts of thee. Let no one say
That sorrowing is vain—it is the dew
That falls at evening from our heaven of love.
One drop of sorrow heals the troubled heart
More than a thousand tongues of consolation.
Sweet Sorrow, still with thee O let me kneel
Beside this peaceful grave, and all alone !
Away all forms of custom, pomp, and show ;
And let no outward thing obstruct the flood
That gushes from my heart ; but, sunk into
A very dungeon of abstracted thought,
And with one sole idea in my mind
Of the sweet form that here in peace is sleeping,
O let me bend—a weeping willow o'er it—
Till, tear by tear, this flesh thaw to the earth,
And, thought by thought, my soul steal from its prison,
Meeting beyond, in the unseen world of spirit,
With thee, beloved, sweet, lost, lovely being !

SELF-SUMMONING.

Be it our custom to retire inside
The framework of our being, and isolate,
Within ourselves, a higher self, to mark
The working of the soul's machinery :
Thereby the erring wheels touch and adjust,
And make our minds in truthful action work.

We are as watches, and do ever tend
To waver into misbelief and error ;
From seconds, brief, unnoticed, on to minutes,
And, if not touch'd in time, to hours ; and then
We have to stop and scour away the rust
That, unperceived, corrodes our delicate springs,
Wastes our fine work away, unfitting us
For thoughts or deeds of any worth or beauty.

I am so sceptical, so given to forget,
Or unbelieve, things that I once believed ;
So prone to err and break good resolutions,
That I ever need a summoning of myself.
And in these silent summonings I've found
There is no safety for our erring souls
But a constant living with the Invisible—
A feeling of God in all we see or hear—
A heart so full of God that all other light

Is shorn, as stars are by the god-like sun,—
And all the little idols that we worship,
Are lost, all lost, in this love of the One,—
A knowing that, wherever we may go,
Whatever may befall us, still is God
There with us, and within us, and about us,—
A Deep Serenity, into whose bosom,
In our affliction, we, at any time,
May fall and be at peace.
O could we keep
Such truth before us ever, such close living
With our dear God, 'twere as impossible
For us to err as for the constant dial,
Whereon the sun—time's god—notes truthful warning.

GO HOME, GO HOME.

It is closing hour—I will work no more.
Now time is my own, since my work is o'er.
I hear the laugh of the merry soul,
And long to join at the smoking bowl:
I see the pots of sparkling beer,
And long to dip my lips in their foam:
But a little song rings in my ear,
And its burden is, "*Go home, go home.*"

'Tis a little song, but full of sense—
The cream of deep experience.
It bothers not with philosophy,
And gives no reason *how* or *why*.
It tells what we know, but seldom note—
That we never repented of going home;
And with a lark's untiring throat,
It sings "*Go home, O do go home!*"

I may not heed that little strain—
For oft it sings to me in vain:
But I ne'er was deaf to its pleading yet,
And pass'd untroubled with regret.
O would my heart had aye been strong,
And shunn'd the snares that o'er us come,
And listen'd to the little song,
Whose burden is, "*Go home, go home!*"

Y^E THREE VOYCES.

Y^e glasse was at my lippe,
  Clere spirit sparkling was;
I was about to sippe
  When a voyce came from y^e glasse:—

"And wouldst thou have a rosie nose—
  A blotchèd face and vacant eye—
A shakey frame that feeblie goes—
  A forme and feature alle awry—
A bodie rack'd with rheumie paine—
A burnt-up stomach, fever'd braine—
A muddie minde that cannot thinke?—
  Then drinke, drinke, drinke."

Thus spoke y^e voyce and fledde,
  Nor any more did say;
But I thought on what it saide,
And threw y^e glasse away.

Y^e pipe was in my mouth,
  Y^e first cloude o'er me broke;
I was to blow another,
  When a voyce came from y^e smoke!

Come, this must be a hoaxe !
  Then I'll snuffe if I may not smoke ;—
But a voyce came from ye boxe !
  And thus these voyces spoke :—

" And wouldst thou have a swimmie hedde,
  A smokie breath and blacken'd tooth ?
And wouldst thou have thy freshnesse fade,
  And wrinkle up thy leafe of youthe ?
Wouldst have thy voyce to lose its tone—
Thy heavenly note a bag-pipe's drone ?—
If thou wouldst thy health's channels choke,
  Then smoke, smoke, smoke ;
Ye pipes of thy sweet musick stuffe,
  Then snuffe, snuffe, snuffe ! "

Thus spoke, and fledde they both.—
  Glasse ! pipe ! boxe ! in a day
To lose them, was I loath ;
  Yet I threw them alle away.

O would we be alle healthe, all lightnesse,
Alle youth, alle sweetnesse, freshnesse, bright-
    nesse—
  Seeing through everythinge,
  With mindes like ye crystal springe :—
O would we be just right enoughe—
Not drinke—not smoke—not snuffe.

Then would our forwarde course
  To ye right be as naturall
As it is, withouten force,
  For stones downwarde to falle.

THE WORLD'S FALSENESS.

Hadst thou, O World, aught of a lasting nature :
Didst taste as sweet as thou art sweet to see ;
O, if thy heart bore out thy outward feature,
Then would I live for thee.

But thou art false ! thy pleasures leave us longing ;
Our longings, got, are not what we desired :
We throng towards things that fade and mock our throngings—
Shadows that leave us tired !

And I am wearied of them ! I have follow'd
Earth's vanities too long ; all earth can give,
Have tasted ; its deep draughts of joy have swallow'd—
Yet discontented live !

Its sweetest sweets, half tasted, turn to sour :
E'en lasting sweets bring loathing with their sweetness ;
Most potent spells of pleasure lose their power—
Showing their incompleteness.

Most treacherous ice is all around ! to which
A venturous thought is e'en too great a load ;
And all gives way beneath our shivering touch—
Until we come to God.

And even He may be a dream! Our faith,
Our love of Him, our wonder, and our trust,
May into air, by the bleak wind of death,
Be blown away as dust.

Yet in this doubt is there not more reality
Than in the most substantial thing of sense?
Not more of truth and heart-sustaining quality
Than aught else can dispense?

O nothing is more real! all beside,
Our breath can blow away; but this it cannot:
And, knowing nought so strong in this world wide,
O why not rest upon it!

TRUST, IN DESPONDENCY.

My being grows to earth, and the quick soul
Doth, day by day, grow weaker ; a gross heap
Of evil thoughts, impure imaginings,
And that thick stupor, of indulgence bred,
Weighs on me like a world and keeps me down ;
And that which we suppose most free--the mind—
Is choked and buried by gross qualities.
No good deed presses through me, no clear thought
Wells like a spring within, but all thick, rank,
And stagnant as yon puddle, is my brain.

Bad, let alone, grows good and beautiful,
And things that we have marr'd and spoil'd grow right,
When to the silent Worker of the universe
Our meddling hands give place. Yea, even from
The refuse and the leavings of the earth,
That lie corrupting—when the poisonous stream
Hath dried into the all-absorbing air,
And He hath breathed within—do flowers spring
And herbs of rarest virtue.—From this time,
I'll add no more to the corrupted mass
That is my mind, but let the ferment cease ;
And the good Spirit that moves in flowers and herbs,
May come into the dark cells of my brain,
And pour again the light which they have lost,

And with His gentle, unperceivèd touch,
Make that as snow which is as foul as sludge,
And that most living which is now most dead.

O, all unhealthy seems the air I breathe,
All cloudy and all hopeless seems my sky;
And I could e'en despair and give all up,
But for my certain trust in the good Spirit
That righteth all we leave into His hand.

FRAGMENTS OF A MEDITATION.

I have a clinging to the joys of earth
That lowly live within the animal.
But there are joys that be *not* of the earth—
Pure things of mind, having no kin to flesh.
Two tides are these that o'er the wide world flow,
Whose waters are apart, yet seem to mingle.
I envy him who can embark on either;
For surely he is happier than I,
Whose love so equal is, and so divided,
That I'll take neither, neither will take me,
But leaves me, like a bark without a pilot,
To drift and veer with the humour of the wind.

Between two streams there flows a backward current,
With eddies and with dimpling pools beset;
Which runs to nowhere, for its ending is
A losing of itself. He that is cast
On this, is lost to earth and heaven: such,
I know, am I: this shrinking of the soul,
This going into nothing—tell they not
The losing of myself?

Is there no strength in mind, no firm-fix'd rock,
That may withstand the opposing floods o' the brain,
And turn them as it lists? Is there no Will?
Can strange upturnings of philosophy
Sweep from the mind the natural sense of freedom,

Telling we are but tools in the Artist's hand?
And are our souls but rays of the Mightiest,
Moved by the one Great-Mind?—We know thee not,
Poor soul, nor what, nor whence we are! And all
That priest, or sage, or poet hath said or written,
Is, to the unknown and all-knowing God,
The babble of a child.

What seek we here? what means this earth? this body?
And where, and what the end to which we hasten?
O flesh! it cannot be for thee we live;
For all thy joys, desires, and appetites
Are counterfeits—sweetmeats that tempt our taste,
But turn to loathsomeness and disappointment.
Thou art of earth, and must to earth go down,
Our truest joys are those that need thee not—
Cool musings in the mind's deep cavern,
'Mid Thought's upbubbling wells, hid from the world;
Or high upsoarings of the heaven-wing'd soul,
That now looks up to an infinite height,
Imagining it sees a seat of rest,—
But anon the placid height is under foot,
And a higher overhead: thus ever, ever
Soaring and seeking—finding and wanting more;
And hoping ever, knowing there *is* more.

Let such our joys be ever; and that life
We look for after this, will be ours now;
And death come o'er us like a wakening,
That gives strength to the limbs, which, in our dream,
Bent under us.

WE ARE EVER GETTING.

Things come into us, and we know not
When they come, or how:
We know not what's within, nor what
We are getting now.

O let our eyes be ever open,
And our bosoms wide;
Beauty is ever on us laving,
Like an incoming tide.

A flood of beauty is about us,
Pressing to get in,
Through cracks and crannies of our senses
To the deep cave within.

Not to be lost—though lost it seem—
Only to slumber long,—
And out in after days to stream
In gushes of sweet song.

THE LIGHT OF STARS.

The soul feels kindred in the light of stars,
And draws unto their glory, near and far—
The big orb'd glow of Jupiter and Mars,
To yonder winking, weak-eyed star,
That weeps alone in the cold north,
A lowly one of neglected worth.
And Venus, the queen star, that tempts, at eve,
Young hearts to worship in the west, and weave
Sweet thoughts into sweet songs,
Musing upon the love of woman—
Fine dream that most belongs
To the melting hour of gloamin' :—
Or when, like spirit rising from the sea,
She comes at morn to wake the sleeping earth,
And breathes her sweet breath o'er the drowsy lea,
While waken'd mountains pant with hope, as forth
She comes to tell them of the breaking day,
And larks are up and carol in her ray.

Good orbs, we cannot love enough your light !
It bathes our gazing eyes till our thick sight
Sees God ; and then we know, or dream,
Of higher being, closer life with Him :
And seeing you, so silent and serene,
O'erwatching us, we wonder what can mean

Our earth, our life, our little history,
So full of bustle, so unlike to ye,—
We who are tied to earth see only part,
Which seems confusion: when the unbound heart
Gets into higher place, then more is seen:—
Among the stars, we'll see what earth doth mean.

Light draws unto it darkness—we are dark,—
And whilst our eyes draw to the stars, and mark
This fascination in the face of night,
Our souls draw to a light *within* star-light.
And darkness, drawn to light, grows light; our eyes,
Our souls, grow light; and all that near them lies
Is brought within the lustre of their sphere,
Till earth and life grow beautifully clear.

NO END.

Each step, each strain of the eye
  Opens out a new horizon;
And every day throws in our way
  Something new, to grow more wise on.

O show me an end to knowing,
  Where mind hath no new seeing,
And then I shall sigh, to think we may die
  And go utterly out of being!

LET US REJOICE THAT WE ARE POOR.

Let us rejoice that we are poor,
And have no gold to keep :
We do not need to bar the door
Ere we can go to sleep :
Who bars his door doth bar his mind,
And shuts it against human-kind ;
Even the turning of a key
Contracts the mind's humanity.

We have no way of getting wealth,
And therefore should be glad ;
For Mammon-worship might by stealth
Creep o'er us if we had :
And then our hearts could love no more
The beauteous things we love, and o'er
Our eyes would grow a golden rust,
Till we could nothing see but dust.

Gold wonderfully warps the mind ;
It strangely shifts the light
That things hang in, turns almost blind
The pure and natural sight ;
But naked truth and beauty lie
Unfolded to the poor man's eye.
Poverty keeps the vision pure :
Let us rejoice that we are poor.

WE ARE FRUIT TREES ALL.

O we are fruit trees all,
With blossoms cover'd over,
Which bloom and make great promise,
But fall and come to nothing!

For bleak winds come and shake us,
And biting frosts that nip us;
And, worse than all, the canker-worm
That of ourselves is born:
It hollows the young bud's heart,
Though it leave a fair outside.

But be our hearts not shaken,
Though our fruit be nipt in the bud:
There is no end to our blossoming,
If we be strong within.

Let us *think* the power is in us—
If we would put it forth—
To turn the winds of heaven,
To thaw the frosts of earth;
That a gall is in the will,
To poison the canker-worm:
And thinking, feeling thus,
Gives us the power.

But if when all our strength
Is used, there still should be
Some wishes, aspirations,
Beyond our bringing out;
Then are they too fine things
To be matured here;
They are as roots and seeds,
That will shoot up with the soul,
Amid the pure air of Heaven.

OUR WEALTH IS WITHIN US.

I stood in the market-place,
Where busy merchants were;
But sorrow and discontent
Arose within my breast.

The stream of wealth ran there,
And they were as green rushes—
They that its waters laved;
But where I stood it took a turn,
And left me poor and bare.
I had no art to bring it near,
No kindred wealth to attract:
So I stood unwater'd, and the ground
About me was so parch'd
That vegetation shunn'd me in a circle.

In this desertedness my heart gave way;
My existence seem'd to shrivel up,
And smoulder into ashes.
I felt as an incumbrance,
And wish'd myself unborn.

But from the smouldering ashes sprang a germ,
Expanding into life;
I felt a new creation coming o'er me;

And those around, amid whom I was insignificance,
I bounded now;
Their wealth and themselves were mine;
My eyes were turned inward, and I saw
The world was in my soul.

Fortune is not without us, at a distance;
It is within us, here.
And he that *chaseth* wealth,
Chaseth a shadow that escapes him.
But let him stand, he finds
The shadow was his own,
And all that he had follow'd,
Flowed out of himself.—
Look in, and know the mind is all that is;
And knowing, feeling it is all,
Then have ye all.

I did not dream such wealth
Was in the market-place;
But there it is—among the wheels of trade:
Yet great ones pass it by;
And only we, the friendless, poor, despised,
Can truly gather it.

LITTLE KATE.

A winking, blinking, little thing,
Full of deep-eyed witcherie ;
Full of artless rollicking,
And ever busy as a bee ;
Making all the house to ring,
She is a very joy to me :
Waking, sleeping, early, late,
My heart is full of little Kate !

She fills the house with such sweet noise,
That even a sage could not rebuke :
To listen to her silvery voice,
I'd lay aside the wisest book ;
And when I'd have my soul rejoice,
Deep, deep into her eyes I look :
I quite forget my day and date,
And lose myself in little Kate !

I hear her voice at break of day,
She's waiting for me when I wake ;
And ever when I go away,
She sobs as if her heart would break.
My darling Kate, I cannot stay,
Or gladly would I for thy sake :
I would the flighty hours would wait,
And let me play with little Kate !

Coming home, I catch her tongue
  Ringing like a little bell,
Joyous as a linnet's song,
  Dulcet as a woodland well:
At the door I listen long,
  Lest my entrance break the spell;—
Ah, what a rattling, prattling state
Thy heart is in, thou little Kate!

She gives my days a sunny hue;
  She keeps me in a world of light:
She is to me a honey-dew,
  That bathes my soul at morn and night,
And keeps my life so fresh and new,
  'Twill ne'er grow old or suffer blight.
She's three, and I am twenty-eight,
Yet feel as young as little Kate.

Ah! would that Time might leave us so!
  But she'll grow old, and I'll grow strange:
Content with loves that round her grow,
  She seeks not yet a wider range:
But years will come, and years will go,
  And with the changing years she'll change:
Then, through the shifting scenes of Fate,
I'll look in vain for little Kate!

THE LONELY ISLE.

I know an isle in the desert sea,
Where many a time I long to be.
Like a child in its mother's lap it lies,
Basking beneath the tropic skies ;
While the fondling waves that round it creep
Seem hushing the innocent to sleep :
And nothing is there to break its rest ;
Only the breeze from the sighing West
Comes lifting among its shrubs, and weaves
A whispering spirit through its leaves.

O never comes summer with its steady breeze
And sunny skies, but the deep blue seas
Come over my heart, and sweep away
All love of this world and our worky day !
And needless seems the work we do
When we lose the end we work unto ;—
I grow idle and dreamy, and long to be
Afar on this isle of the desert sea.

Ah, what a lone desire is this !
No one is there to share the bliss
That dwells amid the loneliness !
No living soul hath touch'd its sod—
No being there, save our lonely God ;

A place where a silent God may brood,
Unknown, in the ocean's solitude.

Great God ! what loneliness to be
As Thou art ! O, no one with Thee
To speak an equal mind ! Alone
From first—and to be aye unknown !—
Such loneliness would wither up
Our souls, like autumn leaves, and stop
The growth that seems to grow to Thee ;
And like the autumn leaves we'd be
Withdrawn by wearisome decay,
And all unnoted waste away !
We are not meant for such a life ;
Are born, and must be bred, in strife ;
Trusting the end may come to good,
Though now so dimly understood.

Sleep on, then, in sunshine and calm,
Sweet Isle, I would be where I am.

THE POET'S THIRST.

A thirst for immortality?
  And could I write one line
That after days might not let die,
But lisp it when in earth I lie,
    And call it *mine;*
Then would I live content to be
My life-time in obscurity;
Then would I die content, although
All else of me to nothing go.

Strange thirst—to live in a few words,
  Yet of it not to know!
To bear the slights that life affords,
And all the much-hoped-for rewards
    Of Heaven forego:
All for this unfelt life in death—
No life to me, but other's breath!—
I'll thirst no more, but easy be
About this vague futurity.

Had we not Shakespeare with us still,
  This life were little worth:
And many a song comes, like a rill,
To slake our parchèd souls when ill
    With pains of earth.

'Tis good and right to minister
To others' wants, and make a stir
To push the work of mind along—
E'en by the cheering of a song.

But if't be *fame* thou singest for,
O sing not; only sing
When the full heart is running o'er
With Nature's spirit,—but no more;
And then thou'lt bring
That to the needy earth it needs,
As rain or dew to summer meads.
God knows when earth wants, and will make
A spring from thy soul's cistern break.

And if this thirst, at any time,
For after-life, in thee
Arise, seek not for it in rhyme,
Nor any trouble take to climb;
Already we
Have that within which shall outlive
The longest fame that earth can give:
O know, thy soul—that fount of thought—
Shall *be* when the great name is nought.

IF THOU WOULDST BE A POET.

If thou wouldst be a poet, and have a mind
For beauty and high thought, and be not blind
To the fine haze that floats throughout the earth,
And gives to seeming worthless things great worth—
Not only temp'rate must thou be, and chaste,
Keeping from all wild stimulants that waste
The inborn strength of the soul—thou also must
Be in thy heart all honest, true, and just;
Believing that the cheater cheats himself,
And loses, though he gain a world of pelf.

Alas! that we should lose our trust in Right,
And dream that there is any other light
But will mislead us! Let not such a dream
Be thine, dear friend. Put all thy faith in Him
That breathes the Right within us evermore:
For he that holds it not as his heart's core,
Can be no poet truly. Earth to him
Is nought but earth, and Heaven far off and dim;
The mind-freeing mystery of Earth and Life
Is hidden from him, and the jar and strife
Of this work-world, to him are what they seem:
He never dreams that they are but a dream.
This breeze that comes o'er the Atlantic-wave,

Brings nought but coolness to him ; and the lave
Of ocean up the beach, speaks with no tongue.
Nor is he like the poet, ever young ;
Loving to bask on sunny banks at noon ;
Or wondering at the big, red, rising moon ;
Drunk with the glory of her midway sailing,
Or sadly, lonely, watching her light failing
When struggling with the blue waves of the west.
Nothing in Nature can his soul invest
With that fine web she weaves for poets' brains :
She *will* have true hearts, free from slavish chains.
Let not the world have any hold of thee :
Surround it quite. Deal not with cheatery.
Think deeply ; briefly speak ; and then—ah me !
I would, my friend, I were as thou wilt be.

THE COBWEB IN THE SKY.

There is a cobweb in the sky,
  Woven of spirit tether ;
Earth and stars are link'd thereby,
  And all things bound together :
Past thoughts run through it, bygone years
Have work'd it full of joys and tears.

No thought, once born, can ever die ;
  Each soul's particular story
Runs through this web of mystery,
  In endless gloom or glory ;
And earth, and air, and starry places
Are netted o'er with human traces.

And thus it is that night and day,
  The sunshine and the showers,
And things that meet us on our way,
  Give something that is ours :
The winter's blast, the summer's breeze,
Repeat our own heart's symphonies.

OUR NEW-BORN.

O heard you not its little voice? That was
Its first earth-cry—ah, when may be its last?
Our household echoes, at the unusual noise,
Start, and seem all aghast!

Echoes, be not afraid; it is a voice
That soon will be the endearment of our home:
And ye will take it up as the most choice
Reclaimer when I roam.

The nooks and corners will take up its grief;
Or when it laughs and prattles, so will they;
But all will be so sadly quiet, if
Our darling go away!

Come, little stranger—stranger be no more,
But abide with us, whom thou art come to bless.
As we o'er thee, so mayst thou yet watch o'er
Our *second* childishness.

Let me not hold the thought that any fate
Might take us from thee in thy infancy:
The World shuns poverty, and poor's thy state—
Ah! who would care for thee?

But I'll not fear: upon the lonely hill,
The heather bell and daisy grow up wild—
And O, how beautiful! Who tends them, will
Not leave a helpless child.

Thou'rt come, my darling, to a beauteous earth;
And thou wilt walk in wonder as I do:
Fine visions have been with me from my birth;
They will be with thee too.

THE BLUSTERING NIGHT.

The wind burst, like an enemy at night,
Into our town, and battled in the streets,
While peaceful folks lay stretch'd in wakeful sheets ;—
But bolted doors withstood the invader's might.

From street to street, in rumbling, roaring din,
He madly ran, and batter'd at the gates ;
The house-tops scaled, and hurtled down the slates
Push'd at the doors, and clamour'd to get in.

The window-shutters to the wall he dash'd,
Howl'd through the window, rattled on the pane,
Rush'd up the entries, hurried back again,
Pull'd down the sign-boards, and the street-lamps smash'd.

The town rock'd like a ship, and the alarm
Deafen'd the inside ear of all our houses :
We could not hear each other for wild noises,
And bawl'd aloud, like sailors in a storm.

He raked the gables, toppled chimneys down,
And had done more, but lo ! the Morning came :

Beneath her innocent eye he quail'd in shame,
Mutter'd a curse or two, and left the town.

We heard him, as he pass'd the eastern port,
Bully the suburbs. When he reach'd the leas,
He tamed in valour to a simple breeze,
And whistled o'er the moors in rural sport.

THE BLEAK BEGINNING OF NOVEMBER.

When the year fell damp and cold,
  Long the nights and short the days,
And the forest's fallen gold
  Trodden in the miry ways;
Cloud-drift trailing on the ridges,
  Moorland rivers swollen and brown,
Lone birds, from the dripping hedges,
  Seeking shelter near the town:
Quite forgotten summer's rays,
  Closed we round the glowing ember,
And deem'd the cosiest of our days
  The bleak beginning of November.

List'ning to the beating storm,
  And the wind up in the vent—
Without, so cold—within, so warm—
  Hearts so full of deep content:
Reading legends in the ashes,
  Telling tales that charm and move;
Looking underneath long lashes
  To devour the eyes we love:—
Eyes are closed and hearts are still'd;
  But 'tis given me to remember
The more than summer light that fill'd
  The bleak beginning of November.

THE NIGHT'S UNRULY.

The night's unruly, rude, unruly;
It will neither hold nor bind.
Every *airt* has sent a wind;
They grapple as they meet,
And pierce the air with shrieks of pain,
Worrying the timid rain—
The rain with plashy feet.
It is a night of terror, truly,
Out there in the street!

Wild beasts in the chimney growling,
Spirits wailing in the lock:
We cannot hear the ticking clock
Beside us in the room.
Our very hearts have ceased to beat,
And pause, as if they paused to meet
The coming crack of doom.—
Blithe fire, how the poor night is howling
Out there in the gloom!

JOHN FROST.

The arch-eyed sun stands in the east, amazed
To find the earth white-sheeted like a ghost,
The russet-mantled earth on which he gazed
Last eve, and had no thought of thee, John Frost.
How busy thou hast been all night, John Frost!

Thou hast been in the woods, and, with a breath,
Still'd all their swaying limbs: transform'd they stand,
Stone giants, held by the enchanted death
Of Eastern tales: majestically grand
The silence they are keeping in the land!

Thou hast been on the hill and in the glen:
And garrulous rocks that held a dripping speech,
Now dumbly sit, like ancient greybeard men,
Peering through rheumy eyes, each into each,
Their language quite escaped beyond their reach.

Thy mystic foot has been upon the lake:
Like a sea monster on dry land, it lies
Pow'rless, and wond'ring crowds come round and make
A marvel of it, gazing in its eyes,
And walking o'er its back in wild surprise.

Thou hast been in the lanes and quiet nooks,
And playing like a breath about the meads,
Over the moonbeams. Thou hast set the brooks
To winter-music, and bedeck'd the reeds
With strings of milk-white coral and crystal beads.

Thou hast new-strung the air, John Frost, and things,
That had no voice for music, find a note.
Most delicate sounds come sweeping, like birds' wings,
Or on the sea of blue air gently float,
Lisping as 'twere the rocking of a boat.

The roads across the country seem to speak,
And tell us of the carrier's heavy wains,
Long miles before they come: a jolt, a creak,—
Anon the airy sweep of tinkling chains,
And still the beat of hoofs on far-off plains.

Earth, air, and water have proclaim'd a king;
We treat him as a knave, and call him Jack—
Misfortune of a too familiar thing!
A heaven of freshness if we would not lack,
We must be born anew, or wander back.

Old Habit serves us well; but we have sold
A kingly birthright for it. It has cost
Uncounted times its worth of life's best gold—
The mystery of common things all lost—
The king, the very god, in thee, John Frost.

THE FOG.

And is this day, or is it night,
That is neither dark nor light?

Day is dead and laid in fog—
Nothing but the fog we see—
The fog and our own breath;
Nothing hear but the night watch-dog,
That howls in time of death;
A raven croaking in a tree,
And a robin in the loaning
Weeping out a mournful ditty.—
All the earth is full of pity:
Surely it has ceased to work,
It is so deeply hush'd. Yet, hark!
No, no—it is the deep sea moaning—
Nothing from the city!
City, village, upland steading—
All are buried in the gloom,
Each within a breathing tomb.—
Alike from outer life are hidden
Lowly cot and lordly seat.
The garrulous road, the hedge that lay
Along the pad, our very feet
Are spirited away.

Wrapt in cloud, on solid land
We do not seem to stand;
But in a mazy heaven each man
Glides, horizon'd by a span.

This is neither day nor night,
Call it what we may;
It has lost the spirit Light;
'Tis but the ghost of Day!

LATE SPRING.

Spring is with us by the sun,
Yet it has not given us one
Little snow-drop to remind us
That the flowery days are near:
For the winds are blowing chilly,
And the firstling of the year
Slumbers with the sleeping lily,
'Neath their coverlet, the sere
And sodden mortcloth that old Autumn
Lay with on her bier.

Spring is with us by the date,
And Winter cancell'd: yet we wait
Balmy fingers to unbind us,
Roots and budlets to unfold.
But the herald larks are roaming
Up the heights of blue and gold:
They can see the Spring a-coming
While we shiver in the cold.
Hark! they sing to Him who taught them
Notes so sweet and bold.

WITHERING LILIES.

And must ye pass away,
Yellow waving lilies?
Greener grow the woodland alleys,
Greener, greener every day;
Summer's coming up the valleys,—
Yet ye will not stay!

I come at morn and even,
This green bank my cushion;
And I worship, in a fashion,
From the lilies up to Heaven:
God, accept my earnest passion,
Be it rudely given!

I bless the time of flowers,
And kneel with each new comer.
My heart's a temple all the Summer,
Visited through all its hours,
Choir'd by every little hummer
Of the leafy bowers.

THE QUESTIONER.

Speak, and tell me, pretty flower,
How you get your beauty's dower—
Tints so delicately fair
You in your sunny bosom wear;
Lips so chaste in form and hue,
Eye of most celestial blue;
And this delicious breath that blends
So divinely with the air—
Your very spirit that ascends
In a never-ceasing prayer!

Lip so chaste, and breath so sweet—
Lip and breath have no replying.
Living beauty at my feet,
In its very beauty dying!
I can only gaze and ponder
On an everlasting wonder.

List! it speaks!—Yea, we inherit
A spirit-ear—it speaks in spirit:—
"Praise God—be joyous for the power
Of seeing beauty in a flower,
And for the still repeated *No*
Unto thy question, *How we grow.*

The beasts beside us in the field
Know not our beauty, neither start
Unanswerable thoughts ; we yield
No stir of wonder in their heart.
And so they die ; but thou shalt not—
Even by virtue of the thought
Thou see'st can be accomplish'd never.
Thou, a questioner for ever
Of the still receding *Yea*,
Needs must have eternal day ! "

TO A SPARROW IN THE CHURCH.

Why come within the temple, little preacher,
To break the sanctities with noisy bill?
Art here not as a learner, but a teacher?
Speaks Heaven in notes so dissonant and shrill?

We listen to the deeply labour'd sermon,
And hearts applaud—though heads as many nod—
Half-comprehend, but nothing well determine:
Thy startling chirrup takes us straight to God.

For thou from long-strain'd art dost nothing borrow;
The same shrill notes, at first in Eden given,
Come through the centuries, making thee, poor sparrow,
The more immediate minister of Heaven.

LILY.

Little Lily, darling Lily,
Lily with the golden hair!
Folks will think me very silly;
But I'll cry, and let them stare—
Cry, and let them think me silly,
Now I journey far from Lily.

She is but a tiny maiden,
Idly playing on the hearth;
I a man with bosom laden,
Laden with the cares of earth.
Yet all cares I can unladen,
Save one for this little maiden.

She is like a hoarded treasure—
Joy of joys when in our eye;
Out of sight, a fearful pleasure,
Lest our wingèd riches fly.
Riches is a sorrow'd pleasure,
Absent from my little treasure!

Why should Absence weep for Lily,
When in thought we are so near?
Ah! we only know the silly,
Partial meaning of a tear.
Tears! O do not think them silly;
They are crystal'd thoughts of Lily.

THE OLDEN TOWN.

'Tis a town of ancient gables
  Leaning into narrow streets,
Lintels with their chisel'd fables,
  Rude devices, quaint conceits;
Gardens old, in warm light sunning,
And through all a river running.

I have stood upon its bridges,
  While the river surged below;
And I've read its streets, like pages,
  Fill'd with tales of long ago—
Mailèd men on bloody foray,
And the martyr's pyre of glory.

But the sweetest thought I cherish,
  Is the *quiet* of the town:
I can let the wild days perish,
  And forget its old renown—
Not its sunny gardens sleeping,
And the dreamy river creeping;

Nor the spire divinely climbing,
  The blue heavens like a pray'r,
With its deep-toned hammer, timing
  Drowsy labour, wakeful care;
Nor the sparrow's rustic ditty,
Ringing through the quiet city.

But you ask me "What about it?"
And in sooth I cannot tell:—
You are vastly well without it;
Yet with me it is a spell:
And I feel rejoiced to give it
To the heart that can receive it.

FOR THE CENTENARY OF ROBERT BURNS.

The world is old! States, Empires, Kings,
Have risen, ruled, and pass'd away;
Yet David harps, and Homer sings,
And he of Avon speaks to-day.

The living song will still abide;
And when our age is dust in urns,
The world, as now, will own, with pride,
Its life-long debt to Robert Burns.

His touch was universal birth;
He set his native streams to tune;
And every corner of the earth
Knows Nith and Lugar, Ayr and Doon.

His homes we seek, his haunts we trace,
Wherever thought of him is found;
We follow him from place to place,
And all is consecrated ground.

On things that disregarded lie
His look bequeath'd a priceless dower:
The trodden daisy caught his eye,
And blossom'd an immortal flower.

Love's tender throes with him became
A sweet religion; and he poured
Such floods of beauty round a name,
That all men love whom he adored.

The patriot-hero's brows he bound
With wreaths, eternal as the sun:
The lowly honest man he crown'd;
He made the king and beggar one.

For well he knew that *Lord*, or *King*,
Was but a word. With deeper scan,
He made both peer and peasant sing
Their highest title still was—*Man*.

In "shooting folly as it flew,"
There never was a deadlier aim;
And even those his satire slew,
Are joint partakers of his fame.

He lash'd the bigot; his the creed
Embracing all humanity;
A conscience clear in word and deed—
One Father, God; and brethren, we.

And if we blame the sparkling rhymes
That made the maddening cup sublime,
Think only of the alter'd times,
And give the censure to the time.

In humour, friendship, pity, worth—
  In themes that change not with the day—
Broad Nature, felt o'er all the earth—
  His genius holds unmeasur'd sway.

Great Prince of song! to mark thy fame,
  O for a moment of thy pen!
'Twere needless pains—thy living name
  Is written on the hearts of men.

Our guilt makes not thy gold more bright;
  But hearts enrich'd would yield returns:
A word of homage meets to-night,
  And every thought breathes ROBERT BURNS.

THE FOX FAMINE IN AYRSHIRE.

[The Eglinton Fox-Hounds.—A meeting of proprietors in the county, and members of Lord Eglinton's Hunt, was held in the King's Arms here on Tuesday. The Marquis of Ailsa having been called to the chair, the Earl of Eglinton explained the reasons which had induced him to convene the meeting, the chief of which was the diminution of foxes. He knew of 29 litters of wild foxes having been bred in the county, in the parts hunted, and yet only 18 of these had been found, some of them never having been seen after the first time. In these circumstances, he was anxious to consult his friends as to the means of having more foxes, and of ascertaining what became of so many of them. A letter was read from Sir James Ferguson, M.P., apologizing for absence, owing to a business engagement, and suggesting that a committee should be formed for the purpose of inquiring into the matter, and conferring with the proprietors, farmers, etc. A general discussion ensued as to the reason of the scarcity of foxes, in which Mr. Oswald of Auchincruive took part. He said it rested entirely with the landed proprietors and lessees of shootings, who could always have foxes if they chose to let their keepers know that they must have them; and he thought it would be nothing short of a disgrace to Ayrshire if, after all Lord Eglinton's liberality in the matter, he were not better supported by the proprietors. It was then resolved to give a dinner at Ayr and one at Kilmarnock (or a ball, if preferred) to the tenantry and occupiers of the farms that the members hunted over, and to provide a similar entertainment to the keepers in charge of the coverts drawn by the hounds. A committee was appointed to carry out these arrangements, and raise subscriptions for the purpose—Lord Ailsa heading the list with a sum of £20. The thanks of the meeting having been unanimously tendered to the noble chairman for presiding, the proceedings terminated.—*Ayr paper*.]

The gentlemen of Ayrshire met of late,
In solemn convocation, to debate
The scarcity of foxes in the shire,
And how they might their tenantry inspire

To foster Reynard's persecuted race;
So that the ancient glories of the chase
Might be revived, and they who own the soil—
But may not till it—find the lordlier toil.

The Kennedy, whose fathers ruled of yore
From Cree to Doon, came from the Carrick shore,
And shed time-honour'd lustre from the Chair.
That letter'd knight, Kilkerran, was not there—
At least in body; but his written page
Spoke on the weighty subject like a sage.
There came the doughty squire of Auchincruive,
Shrewd in debate, and eloquent to move;
Ready to throw his counsel in the scale
When great Montgomerie broach'd the mournful tale—
For the Montgomerie, from his sweet domain
By Irving's placid stream, came to explain
Their lamentable plight. By him 'twas shown
That, out of nine-and-twenty litters known,
Only eighteen were found! And all agreed
It was a lamentable plight indeed:
Of nine-and-twenty litters, eighteen found!
Eleven vanished wholly from the ground!

"Shame, shame!" cried Auchincruive; "but by my thumb!
We'll have no lack of them in time to come.
It rests, my lords and gentlemen, with *us;*
And little more is left us to discuss.

We have our keepers ; let them clearly know
That foxes *must* be had, or keepers *go*."

But some conceived that, in this weaken'd age,
The law of kindness seems to be the rage ;
And some that, where the lion's valour fails,
The fox's sly diplomacy prevails.
So that, instead of measures to coerce,
They quite agreed to something the reverse :
In short, to give a dinner or a ball—
One in Kilmarnock, one in Ayr—to all
Their keepers, and their tenantry whose bounds
Lie in the circuit of the hunted grounds ;—
A novel plan ; but, with my simple eyes,
I cannot see wherein its virtue lies ;
Unless, my lords, your foxes to increase,
You mean to turn your tenants into geese.

And now, my lords and squires, I have a plan,
Which I will state as briefly as I can.—
In all new countries, ere the axe and spade
Have come, their wastes and jungles to invade,
There's *rowth* of foxes, wolves, or other species—
Crafty and fierce as keenest sportsman's wishes.
But just as civilization creeps apace,
The wild-beast and the wilderness give place
To docile cow, mild sheep, and fertile field,
And happy labour with its cosy *bield ;*
To evening books beside the glowing hearth ;
Schools, kirks—in short, a re-created earth ;

Though such as must be tame and commonplace,
For want of foxes and the headlong chase.

Now, would you have the Hunt regain its sway,
Reverse, my lords, the order of the day.
Discourage agriculture, farmers' clubs;
Let turnpike roads run into ruts and *dubs;*
Treat all improvements as invading foes;
Forbid those annual agricultural shows,
And all new-fangled notions about breeding,
Rearing of sheep and cattle, housing, feeding:
Make foxes' burrows of the parish schools,
And have no more half-educated fools:
Snub editors, and put the press in fetters;
Crush penny papers and the love of letters,
That teach the poor to criticise their betters.
That arch reformer, Burns—destroy his name,
And from that lowly hearth put out the flame
Which brings the pilgrim corners of the earth
To worship at the shrine that gave him birth—
Enough itself to scare the fox away,
And keep the good old envied Past at bay.
Rub from your peasants' brains his songs and sonnets,
And soon, my lords, they'll cease to cock their bonnets:
Then ply them well with balls, strong drink, and dinners,
And at discretion use the captured sinners.

Then will the noble wilderness of old,
The golden age—if not the age of gold—
With all its glory come again; and soon
The Irvine, Lugar, Afton, Ayr, and Doon

Forget the marvellous strains that Robin sang,
And 'earn again their old forgotten clang—
The anthem of the forests and the rocks,
The boar, the wolf, the badger, and the fox;
And you, the enlighten'd gentlemen of Ayr,
Crab-like, progress to what your fathers were.

THE DUKE OF BRUNSWICK'S DIAMONDS.

The famous Duke of Brunswick, he surely must be blest,
With the richest hoard of diamonds that ever man possest:
So rich and rare, so bright and fair, were never known before—
I almost feel it wealth enough to tell of such a store.—

There's one of curious history traced back to a Turkish sabre,
Another, supposed invaluable, belong'd to the Emperor Baber;
And a *solitaire* of twelve rich gems, whose chronicles reveal
That they button'd the vest of Pedro, the Emperor of Brazil.
There's one of surpassing lustre, but of a blackish dye,
That served for many centuries as an Indian idol's eye.
There's one that blazed on a German throne, and one of the purest sheen
That upon the lily finger shone of Mary, the Scottish queen,
Diamonds bright as the starry spheres, and diamonds dark as the jet,
And two that have dangled at the ears of Marie Antoinette.

In short, the rarest collection of ancient or modern time;
But to give the merest catalogue is beyond the province of rhyme.
You must see the Duke's own volume for their histories, lustre and rate,
Which he gives in quarto—pages two hundred and sixty-eight.

Now surely the Duke is the happiest man that lives this side o' the grave!
Alas! he is chain'd by his diamonds, he is, body and soul, their slave.
In a Bastille house at Paris he lives, shut up from the sun and the breeze,
By a great dead wall surrounded, and a warlike *chevaux de frise:*
So that when a scaler touches a prong, he touches a secret spring,
And raises the larum loud and long as the bells of the Bastille ring.
Deep sunk in these dark defences lies the bed-room of the Duke,
Into which the honest light of heaven is scarcely permitted to look—
A room with one clink for a window, and a door with wonderful guards,
Which opens to one alone who knows the secret of the wards;
And into the strong thick wall of this room, in a double-ribb'd iron chest,

Like cats' eyes gleaming in the gloom, the precious
diamonds rest.
Before them lies the happy Duke with a dozen loaded
pistols,
That he, without leaving his bed, may enjoy and defend
his beloved crystals.—
But, grant that a burglar scales the wall, vaults over
the *chevaux de frise*,
Breaks open the doors and slays the Duke—What
then? Is the treasure his?
Not yet; for the Duke had closed the safe ere the
thief to his chamber got;—
If he force the lock, four guns go off and batter him
from the spot!

Now *is* not the Duke the happiest man that lives
this side o' the grave?
Alas! he is chain'd by his diamonds, he is, body and
soul, their slave!
He dares not leave his diamonds, he dares not go from
home;
O'er the cloud-capt heights, through the lowly vales,
he has no heart to roam.
Beside the diamond's costly light all other light is dim;
Winter and summer, day and night, can take no hold
on him.
Methinks he would be a richer man were he as poor
as I,
Who have no gems but yon twinkling stars, the dia-
monds of the sky.

Could he the dewy daisies love, those diamonds of the
sod,
Methinks he were a happier man, and a little nearer
God.
I also think, could he sell all and give it to the poor,
The famous Duke of Brunswick's name would famously
endure.

THE LADDIE'S LAMENTATION ON THE LOSS O' HIS WHITTLE.

My Whittle's lost! Yet, I dinna ken:
Lat's ripe—lat's ripe my pouch again.
Na! I ha'e turn'd ower a' that's in'd,
But ne'er a Whittle can I find:—
A bit cauk, and a bit red keel—
The clamp I twisted aff my heel—
A bit auld shoe, to mak' a sling—
A peerie, and a peerie-string—
The big auld button that I faund
When crossin' through the fallow land—
A bit lead, and a pickle thrums—
And, last of a', some ait-cake crumbs.

Yet aye I turn them o'er and o'er,
Thinkin' I'd been mista'en before;
And aye my hand, wi' instinctive ettle,
Gangs to my pouch to seek my Whittle.

I doot it's lost!—how, whar, and whan,
Is mair than I can understan':—
Whether it jamp out o' my pouch
That time I loupit ower the ditch,—
Or whether I didna tak' it up
When I cut a handle for my whup,—
Or put it in at the wrang slit,
And it fell through, doon at my fit.

But mony a gate I've been since then,
Ower hill and hallow, muir and fen,—
Outside, inside, but and ben:
I doot I'll never see'd again!

Made o' the very best o' metal,
I thocht richt muckle o' my Whittle!
It aye cam' in to be o' use,
Whether out-by or in the hoose,—
For slicin' neeps, or whangs o' cheese,
Or cuttin' out my name on trees;
To whyte a stick, or cut a string,
To mak' windmills, or onything.—
Wi' *it*, I was richt whare'er I gaed,
And a' was wrang when I didna hae'd.
I ken na how I'll do withoot it;
And, faith, I'm michty ill aboot it!
I micht as weel live wantin' vittle
As try to live withoot my Whittle.

Yon birkies scamperin' doon the road,—
I'd like to join the joysome crowd;
The very air rings wi' their daffin',
Their rollickin', hallooin', laughin'!
Flee on, my lads, I'll bide my lane;
My heart hings heavy as a stane;
My feet seem tied to ane-anither;
I'm clean dung doited a' thegither.
Hear, how they rant, and roar, and rattle!
Like me, they hinna lost a Whittle.

It was the only thing o' worth
That I could ca' my ain on earth:
And aft I wad admeerin' stand,
Haudin' the Whittle in my hand;
Breathin' upon its sheenin' blade,
To see how quick the breath wad fade;
And weel I kent it wad reveal
The blade to be o' richt guid steel.

Puir Whittle! whar will *ye* be now?
In wood? on lea? on hill? in howe?
Lyin' a' cover'd ower wi' grass?
Or sinkin' doon in some morass?
Or may ye be already fund,
And in some ither body's hand?
Or will ye lie till, ruisted o'er,
Ye look like dug-up dirks of yore?—
When we're a' dead, and sound eneuch,
Ye may be turn'd up by the pleuch!
Or fund i' the middle o' a peat,
And sent to Edinbruch in state!
There to be shown—a won'drous sicht—
The Jocteleg o' Wallace Wicht!

Thus, a' the comfort I can bring
Frae thee, thou lost, lamented thing!
Is to believe that, on a board,
Wi' broken spear, and dirk, and sword,
And shield, and helm, and ancient kettle,
May some day lie my ruisty Whittle!

THE GABERLUNZIE'S SONG.

There's some can be happy and bide whar they are,
There's ithers ne'er happy unless they gang far ;
But aft do I think I'm an easy auld stock,
While I'm joggin' aboot wi' my muckle meal-pock.

Though now I be auld, abune four-score and aucht,
Though my pow it be bauld, and my craig be na straucht,
Yet, frae mornin' till e'en—ay, as steady's a rock—
I gang joggin' aboot wi' my muckle meal-pock.

Juist our ain pairish roond, and nae mair I gang through,
And when at the end I begin it anew ;
There isna' a door but wad blithely unlock,
To welcome me ben wi' my muckle meal-pock.

There isna' a hoose but I micht mak' my hame,
There isna' an auld wife wad think me to blame,
Though I open'd the door withoot gi'ein' a knock,
And cam' ben to the fire wi' my muckle meal-pock.

As ony newspaper, they say, I'm as gweed ;
And better, say some, for they hinna to read :
The lads and the lasses aroond me a' flock,
And there's no ane forgets that I ha'e a meal-pock.

The gudeman he speaks aboot corn and lan',—
"Hoo's the markets," says he, "are they risen or fa'n?
Or is this snawie weather the roads like to chock?"—
But the gudewife aye spiers for my muckle meal-pock.

To be usefu' to her I haud sticks on the fire,
Or when, to the milkin', she gangs to the byre,
She'll gi'e me a haud o' the cradle to rock,
And for that she's aye guid to my muckle meal-pock.

Though my friends a' be gane whar I yet ha'e to gang—
And o' followin' them now I canna be lang—
Yet while I am here I will laugh and I'll joke,
For I'll aye find a friend in my muckle meal-pock.

JOHN AND TIBBIE'S DISPUTE.

John Davison and Tibbie, his wife,
Sat toastin' their taes ae nicht,
When something startit in the fluir,
And blinkit by their sicht.

"Guidwife," quoth John, "did ye see that moose?
Whar sorra was the cat?"
"A moose?"—"Ay, a moose."—"Na, na, Guidman,—
It wasna a moose, 'twas a rat."

"Ow, ow, Guidwife, to think ye've been
Sae lang aboot the hoose,
An' no to ken a moose frae a rat!
Yon wasna a rat! 'twas a moose."

"I've seen mair mice than you, Guidman—
An' what think ye o' that?
Sae haud your tongue an' say nae mair—
I tell ye, it was a rat."

"*Me* haud my tongue for *you*, Guidwife!
I'll be mester o' this hoose—
I saw't as plain as een could see't,
An' I tell ye, it was a moose!"

"If you're the mester o' the hoose,
It's I'm the mistress o't:
An' *I* ken best what's in the hoose—
Sae I tell ye, it was a rat."

"Weel, weel, Guidwife, gae mak' the brose,
An' ca' it what ye please."
So up she rose, and made the brose,
While John sat toastin' his taes.

They supit, and supit, and supit the brose,
And aye their lips play'd smack;
They supit, and supit, and supit the brose,
Till their lugs began to crack.

"Sic fules we were to fa' oot, Guidwife,
Aboot a moose"—"A what!
It's a lee ye tell, an' I say again
It wasna a moose, 'twas a rat!"

"Wad ye ca' me a leear to my very face?
My faith, but ye craw croose!
I tell ye, Tib, I never will bear't—
'Twas a moose!"—"'Twas a rat!"—"'Twas a moose!"

Wi' her spoon she strack him ower the pow—
"Ye dour auld doit, tak' that—
Gae to your bed ye canker'd sumph—
'Twas a rat!"—"'Twas a moose!"—"'Twas a rat!"

She sent the brose caup at his heels,
  As he hirpled ben the hoose ;
Yet he shoved oot his head as he steekit the door,
  And cried, "'Twas a moose ! 'twas a moose ! "

But, when the carle was fast asleep,
  She paid him back for that,
And roar'd into his sleepin' lug,
  "'Twas a rat ! 'twas a rat ! 'twas a rat ! "

The de'il be wi' me if I think
  It was a beast ava !—
Neist mornin', as she sweepit the fluir,
  She faund wee Johnnie's ba' !

SPUNK JANET'S CURE FOR LOVE.

I've vowed to forget him again and again ;
  But vows are as licht as the air is, I trow ;
For something within me aye comes wi' a sten',
  And dunts on my heart till I gi'e up the vow.

I gaed to Spunk Janet, the spaewife, yestreen—
  I've often heard folk o' her wisdom approve :—
Quoth she, "It's your fortune you're wantin', I ween?"—
  "No ! Janet," quoth I, "will ye cure me o' love ?"

"I'll try it," quoth she ; "say awa' wi' your tale,
  And tell me the *outs* and the *ins* o' it a' ;'
Does love mak' ye lichtsome, or does't mak' ye wail ?
  Ye see, lass, I ken it does ane o' thae twa."

"Aweel, then, to tell you the truth o' it, Janet,
  There's sometimes I'm clean overflown' wi' glee,
And ither times, woman, I'm no fit to stan' it,—
  Ye'd think I wad greet out the sicht o' my ee.

"But then there's the laddie, *I* never can get him,
  And here am I ready and willin' to pay,
Gin ye'll play some *cantrip* to mak' me forget him—
  The thochts o' him deave me by nicht and by day."

"I'll e'en try my skill on't," quoth Janet, "I shall,—
The cost o' my coonsel is but half-a-croon,—
Hooever, i' the first place, ye ken the Witch-walle,
That bonnie clear spring at the end o' the toon :—

"When the sun frae his bed is beginnin' to teet,
Gang ye ilka mornin', blaw weet or blaw wind,
And sit by the wallie and dip in your feet,
Without e'er a thocht o' the lad in your mind.

"Do this for a week, and the cure will be wrocht—
But, mind ye, tak' care o' what comes in your head !
If e'er it should chance that *the lad* be your thocht,
Like mist o' the mornin' the cantrip will fade !"

Thus ended Spunk Janet : I paid her the fee ;
And by her directions I promised to bide :
To-morrow the *cantrip* begins, I maun be,
By the first peep o' day, at the Witch-wallie's side.

The cauld o' the water I weel may endure ;
But then, there's *the thocht*, it's the warst o' it a' :
For if ower the thochts o' my mind I had pow'r,
I wadna ha'e needed Spunk Janet ava !

WIDOW SALMON'S PRAYER,

ON THE APPROACH OF RENT-DAY.

Ye open-minded, if it be your will,
And if ye ha'e a wee, wee while to spare,
O dinna let your hearts be hard and chill,
But listen to auld Widow Salmon's prayer.

Four score o' years I've been a dweller here,
And mony *ups* and mony *doons* I've seen;
I canna weel keep in the gatherin' tear,
As aft I think on what I ance ha'e been.

The pomp o' riches never was my share;
But health and strength and happiness were mine;
A humble livin'—and I socht nae mair—
Was a' I got frae Providence divine.

The mornin's blush but flutters ower the sky;
The early dews but kiss, and leave the lea;
Sae health and youth and happiness did fly,
And left me here to fecht wi' povertie.

There was a time—it ne'er will be again—
When I was strong and fit to win my bread;
Though willin' yet to work, my strength is gane,
And I hae hardly where to lay my head.

The howlin' blast around my garret blaws,
And awsome shudders nichtly ower me creep!
The eerie wind comes whistlin' through the wa's,
And wi' its frichtsome crune disturbs my sleep.

My garret barely fends me frae the storm,
Yet wi' sma' comforts I am weel content;
But oh, I'll ha'e to leave it at the *Term*
I dinna ha'e the means to pay the rent!

Ye feelin' hearted, if it be your will,
O help me, if ye ha'e a mite to spare!
To meet the term-day it will beat my skill!
The payin' o' my rent is a' my care!

O help me, while your helpin' is o' use—
I may na trouble you the next term-day;
Soon, soon I'll leave my garret for a hoose
Of many mansions, and nae rent to pay!

MY MITHER'S GRAVE.

I wander'd out ae simmer's eve,
  My mither's lanely grave to see :
My heart was dowie and did grieve ;
  The tremblin' tear stood in my e'e.

Calm was the nicht—no e'en a breath
  To fan the gowan on the lea ;
At ither times I'd ha'e been laith,
  But on that nicht I'd liked to dee.

Although the road was wild and lang,
  I wander'd on, and wasna' fear'd ;
For on that nicht my heart was strong,
  And bore me to yon auld kirkyard.

Weel did I ken whereat to look,—
  Near by yon auld, yon stately yew,
Where, shelter'd in a lanely nook,
  The grass was hoary white wi' dew.

The auld yew-tree seem'd ghastly mute :
  I made its droopin' branch my chair,
And, calm and saftly, on my flute,
  Play'd ower my mither's favourite air.

Methocht the bended gravestanes rose,
The faulded flow'rets open'd wide,
As up amang the yew-tree boughs
My mither's favourite tune did glide!

That was enough—that mournfu' tune
Tauld a' the yearnings o' my heart;
It made me think o' lands abune,
It made auld recollections start.

At length the cushat ceased to coo,
And gloamin' faded into gloom;
I mixed my tears amang the dew,
And, laithfu', left my mither's tomb.

———

THE WEE HERD LOON.

O that I were the wee herd loon
That basks upo' yon sunny lea !
Ilk ither wish I wad lay doon,
A laddie herdin' kye to be.

I'd lose the little lear' I ha'e,
And learn the herdie's simple arts—
To build a housie 'mang the strae ;
To mak' wee neep and tawtie carts ;

To mak' a kep o' rashies green,
And learn the herdie's gleesome lauch ;
To mak' a rattle for the wean,
Or cut a whistle o' the sauch ;

To licht a fire upon the muir,
That a' the herdies may sit doon ;
Or set the whins on bleezin' fire,
That a' the herdies may rin roun' ;

To plait a whup for drivin' kye,
And learn the herdie's sangs to sing,
And wi' the herdie's hooin' cry,
Gar a' the echoing woodlands ring ;

To climb the green-wood trees sae high,
And shogin' sit amang the boughs,
And watch the birdies flitting bye,
Or mark the burnie as it rows ;

To mak' wind-mills and water-wheels ;
To be ilk thing that's herdie like—
A wee-thing fear'd o' ghaists and de'ils,
Or onie ither uncannie tyke ;—

Get shoon wi' clampit heels and taes,
And five fu' rows o' muckle tackets ;
Corduroy and fustian claes,
Wi' pouches fu' o' queer nick-nackets.

O blithesome are the herdie's ways !
I had a wee, wee tastin' o' them ;
But Time's a flood that never stays—
A flood that beats mankind to fathom,—
It wafted me frae herdin' days
Ere I was weel begun to know them !

SIGNS O' RAIN.

Written when on a Pedestrian Tour with a Friend.

Now are we fresh and swank as eels,
And fit to walk a score o' miles;
And if the day wad but keep fair,
We'd tramp a score o' miles and mair.
But worms hae left the grassy sod,
And streek themsel's out on the road;
And, as they crawl, they seem to say,
"My lads, beware o' rain the-day."

The far-aff hills creep near the toons,
And draw their mist-keps ower their croons;
Near seems the distant lammie's bleat;
Kye snuff the air and winna eat;
The swallows lowly skim the field;
The trees unusual fragrance yield:—
Hills, trees, kye, lambs, and swallows say,
"My lads, beware o' rain the-day."

PEASE BROSE.

The mighty earl of Eglinton,
With lords and ladies fair,
Over his wide domain has gone,
To hunt the timid hare.

Over the lawns, and across the brooks,
And adown the rushy dells;
Through woods that ring with noisy rooks,
And along the clanging fells.

But a sudden storm o'erran the day
As they scour'd an open field;
And fain were they to bend their way
To a tenant's lowly bield.

As in beneath the sheltering sheds
The courtly riders wheel,
They come on a group of curly heads
Around their mid-day meal.

And some remark'd their sun-bleach'd hair,
And some their bright blue eyes;
But what the nature of their fare,
No lordling could surmise!

Then turn'd they to the earl, each one—
Not even his earlship knows.
"What's that you eat?" asked Eglinton.
They answer him—"*Pease Brose.*"

"Pease Brose to dinner! brose alone!
With neither boil nor stew!
But say, what did you breakfast on?"—
They answer—"*Pease Brose too!*"

"Such food for pigs were better fit!—
Yet say, my little men,
What kind of supper will you get?"
"*Ou juist Pease Brose again!*"

"Pease Brose! and still again Pease Brose!
What does your father do
With all the oats and wheat he grows?
Eggs, cheese, and butter too?"

The eldest cries, with half a frown,
As down his spoon he throws,—
"That greedy sinner, Eglinton,
Leaves naething but *Pease Brose!*"

The red broke through the earl's pale face,
The blue broke through the day;
He spurr'd his charger to the chase,
And swiftly they rode away.

But the curly heads coursed in his mind—
For so the story goes,—
And ever after that they dined
On better than *Pease Brose.*

THE AULD GABERLUNZIE IS DEAD AND AWA'.

Wild was the e'enin', the wind it was howlin',
And, souffin' and snellin', the drift it did blaw;
Doon in the muirland a doggie was yowlin'
For some weary body owerta'en by the snaw.
Sairly we wish'd for the dawn o' the day,
And mony a saut tear o' sorrow did fa';
And mony a heart in the parish was wae,—
'Twas the auld Gaberlunzie lay dead in the snaw!

Nae mair shall we feast ower the news o' the clachan,
Or hear how the lairds gang wi' lairds to the law;
We'll hear nae mair clashes to set us a-lauchin',—
The auld Gaberlunzie is dead and awa'!
Nae mair will auld grannie sit crackin' at e'en
Wi' the coothie auld carle ayont by the wa',
And lauch ower the jokes o' the days that ha'e been,
Now the auld Gaberlunzie is dead and awa'!

Nae mair will the lasses wha work at the ferm
Ken how ither lasses are growin' sae braw;
Or wha's to be married at Marti'mas term,—
The auld Gaberlunzie is dead and awa'!
Nae mair will auld grandfaither crack o' the war
Wi' the skilly auld bodie, wha ken'd o' it a';
His heart now is dowie, and heavy, and sair,
Since the auld Gaberlunzie is dead and awa'.

Nae mair will the laddies hear auld-farrant stories
O' ilka auld castle and queer-biggit ha',
O' ghaists and o' witches, o' warlocks and fairies,—
The auld Gaberlunzie is dead and awa' !
Wha could hae thocht we shud miss him sae ill !
The parish is no like a parish ava !
Naething to cheer us now ! a' bodie's dull,
Since the auld Gaberlunzie is dead and awa' !

MY GRAY SUIT.

I like my gray suit, it's sae coothie, saft, and warm;
It does for ony weather, be it sunshine, be it shour;
In sleety winter-time it's the colour o' the storm;
On breezy simmer days it's the colour o' the stour.
At ony time o' year, on ony kind o' day,
I never can be wrang in my suit o' hoddin-gray.

I like my gray suit, it's sae like the things I like;
It aye seems sae in keepin' wi' the woodlands and the hills;
It seems at hame by loch, and burn, and whinstane-dyke,
And looks as if't had grown upon the muirland-fells:—
The heath-cock sits him still, nor starts out o' my way,
Sae friendly do I look in my suit o' hoddin-gray.

I like my gray suit, for it looks sae snod and clean:
To keep it decent-like, needs neither fyke nor fash:
If it tak' on dirt ava, the fient a speck is seen;
It never looks the waur, and never needs a brush.
It mayna be sae braw as black or blue; but they
Could never stand the wear sae weel as hoddin-gray.

I like my gray suit, though a puirish look it has:—
The man should be ashamed to borrow frae the coat;

And, seen aricht, our claes and hooses are but glass,—
For *clear* een look clean through them—it's the man
inside they note.
Folk needna mind the moty een, whase dust-bedizen'd
ray
Sees naething but the puirish look that's in the hoddin-
gray.

I like my gray suit for reasons monifauld,—
But maist of a', because my Peggie likes it too:
She ca's me "Robin Gray"—but keeps awa' the
"Auld"—
And dauts my shuither kindly when I come to woo.
Her heart beams in her een, whilk, sparklin', seem to say,
"Ah, weel I like to see ye in your suit o' hoddin-gray!"

AULD JOHN BROON.

Auld John Broon, he's a hunder near !
He says he'll be dead ere the tail o' the year ;
But for twa or three years he has said the same,
And we ha'e him yet in our cosie hame—
A snug cottar hoose on the edge o' a muir,
Wi' a theekit ruif and an earthen fluir.

In the big arm-chair, by the ingle-cheek,
He sits a' day amid the blue reek ;
His auld broad bonnet upon his croon,
And twa-three white locks stragglin' doon :
His big auld shune that were made lang syne,
Ere his feet and kuits began to crine ;
His ribbit stockins o' a purple hue ;
His cloutit knee-breeks, his auld coat o' blue,
Wi' buttons on't like the rising mune—
Gude sakes ! that coat will ne'er gang dune !—
The lee-lang day, and aye the auld seat,
Wi' his hands on his staff, and his staff 'tween his feet,
And his chin on his hand, and his head bent doon,
Sunk into himsel', sits Auld John Broon.

His words are few ; for he seems to care
But little for this warld and a' its gear :

It may be his mind is maist part awa'
To yon Heaven that will ere lang ha'e it a' :
But at times it comes back, wi' a beauteous glow,
And ower his auld features seems to flow,
Laving them like a limpid stream,
While youth comes ower him like a dream.
But it flushes awa', as it came, and then
He sinks back into himsel' again.
And whiles he'll fa' into a dozing sleep,
Now licht and flickery, and now deep, deep ;
Then he'll wauken and yawn, fu' aft and wide,
And shake his head slowly frae side to side,
And mutter strange things into himsel'
That to us hae neither head nor tail.
The bairns creep stealthily round his chair,
And look up wi' a wondersome air—
Wi' awe-struck e'e, and arch'd e'e-brou,
And staunin'-up hair, and gapin' mou'.—
He looks at them wi' a glitterin' e'e,
But ye canna weel tell whether he can see.—
Though little he says, and does naething ava,
He is strangely felt by ane and a'.

Auld men and bairns are the gods of earth,
When ower auld or ower young to utter forth
The soul within them ; for we feel
A presence that words could not reveal ;
And they work mair deeply upon the heart
Than a learned man wi' a' his art :
A dottle auld carle, or a babbling wean,

Into the midst o' yon wise folk ta'en,
Wad absorb the thochts of every ane.
Had we een that could read, and heads that could learn
We shud get deep lessons frae the auld man and bairn.

Auld John Broon, he sits at the fire ;
Ye wad think he had nae ither desire,
But he's neither deaf nor blind outricht,
When on his dull hearin', or his dim sicht,
The voices and glances o' Nature alicht.
On simmer days, when we are a' gane
To the field, and he sits dozing alane—
Wi' nane but the lassie to mind the pat,
Tak' care o' the bairns, or the like o' that—
A sun-glint bursts through the winnock-pane,
And fa's ower his feet, and on the hearth-stane ;
It warms his heart, and he lifts his een,
That glitter as he looks up to the sunsheen :
And he harks ! for the laverock's notes on high
Come doon like rain-draps fresh frae the sky ;
And he hears the croak o' the passing craw,
Now harsh, now fading far awa' ;
And the clamour o' sparrows comes to his ear ;
The keckle o' the hens, and chanticleer,
Flappin' his wings and crawin' sae shrill,
That he startles the gray rocks, asleep on the hill.
Ilk thing bursts out into joyousness—
Wha could bide in the hoose on a day like this ?—
E'en restless grows the auld man there,
And he langs to get out into the sweet air :

Then wi' his staff and the lassie thegither,
He reaches the door, leanin' on her shuither.
Ayont the door-cheek is a stane bench, where
She lats him cannily doon wi' care.

Bathed in sunsheen and balmy air,
He seems to enjoy the green earth ance mair,
Wakenin' frae out o' his aged swoon,
Maist thinkin' himsel' to be *young* John Broon!—
Were his limbs as they were wont to be,
He wad up and dance aboot wi' glee:
His *will* loups up, but his banes keep him doon,
And tell him that he is *auld* John Broon!

Sweet day, ye ha'e dune what naething else can,—
Ye ha'e brought back the speerit o' this auld man.
But it comes and goes as the weather may be;
He droops or looks up like the flower on the lea.
And ower his existence he has nae power—
He is guided by the hand that guides the flower.
Nae count, nae care, nae pain has he;
He never was ill, and he never will be;
And death will come saftly and close his e'e:—
Spirit slip up—body lie doon—
That will be the end of Auld John Broon.

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